

THE ADMIRAL

Written by

Vin Colella & Tim Shireman

Based on a true story.

An ambitious young musician chasing a record deal in the 1990's finds himself immersed in a seedy underworld of sex, crime, drugs, and violence when he takes a job moonlighting as a strip-club bouncer in America's Most Dangerous City.

OPEN TO: A MONTAGE of black and white photos.

VIN (V.O.)

Welcome to Camden. When the Ben Franklin Bridge opened in 1926, Admiral Wilson Boulevard was christened the Gateway to New Jersey. Officials hoped it would help transform the city into a second Brooklyn. And for a while, in it's glory days, it did.

END MONTAGE

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE BAR AND GRILL - EVENING

Doo-wop music playing from its open windows, a 1950's Detroit land yacht cruises into the parking lot, all gleaming chrome, tail fins and spoke-rimmed whitewalls.

VIN (V.O.)

Back in the day, Camden was the place to be. Right across the river from Philly, it had a thriving nightclub scene, one that rivalled Atlantic City in almost every way.

Business is brisk, and the liquor store serves a steady stream of customers. The cinder-block wall sports an arrow pointing the way to the bar entrance around the side.

A trio of smoking teenagers pass around a flask, emptying it and slicking back their Frankie Avalon hairstyles before entering the swanky lounge via a red metal door.

TITLE CARD: The Admiral

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

SUPER: 30 YEARS LATER

The red door is now dented with aluminium patches over rusted holes. Weeds and trash litter the sidewalk and heavy security gates cover the liquor store's windows.

The building sits on the heavily traveled highway connecting Philadelphia with New Jersey. The boulevard is divided by a concrete median with a 10 foot fence reminiscent of Escape from New York. The roadway is well lit by overhead lamps, but the bar sits back in the shadows a bit.

VIN (V.O.)

By the 90's, things in Camden had really gone downhill. It was sad. Decades of corruption and neglect left the city a hollowed-out ghetto, an open air drug market where dealers, pimps and prostitutes sold their services 24/7. Entire blocks became crack houses, and the same bubblegum gangsters who shot up the neighborhood every night walked those bloodstained streets with impunity by day.

3 Harleys rumble up to the Lounge entrance. Sporting patches identifying them as members of the Druids motorcycle club, the burly riders kill their engines and head inside the smoky dive bar.

VIN (V.O.)

Along that lawless 2 mile stretch of highway, it was anything goes.

After a long moment, the heavy door bursts open and 2 of the bikers are roughly shoved outside by a small wall of bouncers led by stout, goateed ginger bulldog, CHOWDER, and rangy brawler PAUL, a Roadhouse version of Danny McBride.

VIN (V.O.)

Grand Theft Auto brought to life. A living, breathing Sin City.

5 feet of pure buxom brashness, an irate BRENDA Cordova escorts the third man out by pinching his earlobe while holding the tip of a switchblade firmly inside his nostril.

BRENDA

Are you fucking kidding me, JJ?

VIN (V.O.)

Welcome to the Admiral.

BRENDA

Until you learn how to behave, stay the FUCK out, ya understand?

VIN (V.O.)

That's Brenda. She owns the place. Believe it or not, she won the nightclub in a divorce settlement.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

JJ

Aight Brenda, take it easy. I was here to see Laurie. The boys were just amusing themselves while they was waiting for me.

BRENDA

Well, it'll cost you then.

The sassy 45 year-old redhead lowers the knife, reaches into the biker's leather vest and pulls out a small baggie of white powder.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

And for the last fucking time--

She pries open the plastic bag and uses the extended blade to expertly scoop out a small pile before snorting the bump.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Stop using so much goddamn Lidocaine.

VIN (V.O.)

Oh, did I mention that Brenda also has a pretty bad coke habit?

Brenda folds up the switchblade and hands it back to JJ, sniffing and pinching her nose while discretely tucking the blow inside her gaudy sequined bra.

BRENDA

Go sell that stepped-on bullshit over at the Quarter.

Brenda laughs and walks back to the door.

VIN (V.O.)

*As I was saying:
Welcome to the Admiral.*

The grizzled enforcer straddles his custom bike and turns to address VIN, a lanky young bouncer with long dark hair.

JJ

Yo Vin, you guys still playing the Galaxy next weekend?

VIN

Yeah man, we're finally headlining. And the guitarist from Britny Fox and Cinderella is coming to see us play. Said he might produce our first album. Fingers crossed.

VIN (V.O.)

That's me, by the way. 19 and ready to take on the world.

JJ

No shit? I like that 'Round and Round' song! Congratulations, it's about fucking time, brother!

The bikers nod in agreement and fire up their steel horses.

VIN

(mumbles to self)

That's RATT, dude.

Backing out, the bikes roar onto the street before immediately turning into the parking lot of The French Quarter, a rival strip club conveniently located next door.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE BAR AND GRILL - CONTINUOUS

Brenda ushers her security team back over to the doorway.

BRENDA

Well, what am I paying you for? Get back to work before Rizzo nods off in the DJ booth again.

PAUL

Man, he's in rare form tonight.

CHOWDER

Hugh Hefner on acid.

VIN

He's like Wayne Newton meets Keith Richards.

BRENDA

Hey, show some goddamn respect. That's my husband you assholes are talkin about.

VIN

Sorry, Boss.

BRENDA
(flirty)
Don't worry, rock star.
You can make it up to me later.

CHOWDER
Aw, jeez. Here we go--

PAUL
Too late. Gail already called first
dibs on the new guy.

BRENDA
We'll see about that.

Adjusting her ample bosom, Brenda re-enters the club as the bouncers linger outside to finish their cigarettes.

VIN
Oh, come on. She wasn't serious?

PAUL
Who, Gail? Hundred percent.

CHOWDER
I wouldn't if I was you. But man,
it sure would piss off Jumbo.

PAUL
Good. Fuck Jumbo.
Besides, its Gail. I mean, what a
way to go. Aye caramba!

VIN
What's that supposed to mean?

CHOWDER
It means be careful. Gail's biggest
fan is a homicidal fucking maniac.

VIN
WHAT?

PAUL
Yeah, he's a real piece of shit.
Him and Big Dave both.

VIN
Who's Big Dave?

PAUL
Let's just say that any powder that
comes into South Jersey has to get
the OK from Big Dave.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

He runs a few strip joints over in Philly, too. Not a guy you want to mess with. Jumbo works for him.

CHOWDER

He tries to convince girls from the Jersey side to come work for Big Dave instead.

PAUL

Fucker gives them a little blow, maybe some meth. Just enough to get his hooks into them, and they pretty much do what he wants.

CHOWDER

Before you know it they're dancing in Kensington or South Philly, all strung out on crack and heroin.

Chowder stubs out his smoke and spits in disgust.

CHOWDER (CONT'D)

Total scumbags, both of them.

PAUL

Fucking psychos if ya ask me.

Vin holds the battered door open as his fellow bouncers file back inside. He shakes his bewildered head with a laugh.

VIN

Well fellas, I gotta tell you, this has been one hell of a first shift.

CHOWDER

Oh, tonight was nothing.

PAUL

Pretty quiet actually.

VIN

Are you kidding?
This place is fucking nuts.

Bringing up the rear, Vin pauses to glance at the street. A gaunt black man sits on the stoop nursing a quart of beer and petting a stray cat as a summer breeze blows trash across the parking lot. The man nods at Vin, who returns the gesture and heads inside.

VIN (CONT'D)

I can't wait to see what kind of
crazy shit happens tomorrow.

The red metal door slams shut ominously behind him.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

After a moment, a shadowy figure moves in the darkness at the rear of the building, emerging from behind the dumpster and into the flickering streetlight.

With salt and pepper hair and weighing in at 400 pounds, JUMBO practically waddles, lumbering along with a scowl on his sweaty face. Concealed in the palm of his meaty hand, he repeatedly extends and retracts the blade of a box cutter.

VIN (V.O.)

*I know. Be careful what you wish
for, right? We'll get to that, but
first things first.*

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

SUPER: 36 HOURS EARLIER

Wearing construction boots and dirty jeans, Vin sits on a shabby recliner talking to GRANDMA on the phone. He circles classified ads and Help Wanted postings in a newspaper.

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Are you eating?
You need to eat, Vinny. You're
going to fade away to nothing.

VIN

You say that every single time.

In similar work attire, Vin's roommate CHRIS lies sprawled on the worn sofa, stoned and seemingly dead to the world.

Other than a smoldering makeshift bowl, the coffee table holds only empty beers, cigarette butts and guitar parts.

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Are you coming over for dinner
Sunday and bringing that nice
teacher you've been seeing?

VIN

No, we had a fight.
It's a long story.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
It usually is. So, how's the music?

VIN
Good. We have a big show coming up.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
That's nice, maybe one day it'll help pay some bills.

VIN
I'm trying to find a second job to pay for more studio time.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Well, good luck. You know I'm always pulling for you. I love you.

VIN
Love you too. See you Sunday.

Vin smiles and hangs up. A job offer catches his interest, so he leans over to tap Chris' dangling shoe with a pen.

VIN (CONT'D)
Yo, think I could be a bouncer?

CHRIS
Maybe. Where?

VIN
Strip club.

Intrigued, Chris sits up and reaches for the bowl.

CHRIS
Strip club where?

VIN
Camden.

CHRIS
Yikes. Where in Camden?

VIN
Admiral Wilson Boulevard.

CHRIS
I don't know, man.
That's a bad fucking neighborhood.

VIN
Says here: 'paid in cash nightly'.

CHRIS
Cash? So it's under the table?

VIN
Looks that way.

CHRIS
Cash and strippers? Call 'em up!
I'll come visit while you work!

VIN
Oh, I bet you will.

Chris takes a hit and offers the bowl to Vin, who declines.

VIN (CONT'D)
It's only part time, but the
construction gig ain't paying
enough and I don't see much else
out there right now, especially for
cash. What do I know about
bouncing, though?

CHRIS
(coughs)
What do you mean? What's to know?
Ya already know how to fight, least
now you'd be gettin paid for it.

VIN
Well yeah, but--

CHRIS
Christ, I've seen you and your
brother beat the shit out of each
other half a dozen times.

VIN
That was different. That's brother
crap. I think I've been in 3 or 4
fights my whole life.

CHRIS
Besides, it sounds like a dream
job. Isn't that supposed to be your
whole 'Rock God' persona? Sex,
Drugs & Rock N Roll?

VIN
The American Way, right?

CHRIS
It's a no-brainer. Go for it.

Encouraged, Vin grabs the phone and starts to dial.

VIN
 Fuck it. Why not? I'll just act
 crazy if things get out of hand.
 Plus, I'll be sober and they'll be
 drunk. How hard could it be?

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE BAR AND GRILL - THE NEXT DAY

Wearing sunglasses and long hair gathered in a ponytail, Vin exits the car into the sweltering summer heat. FREDDY, a local homeless man, leaves his perch on the liquor store stoop and shuffles over to greet the new arrival.

FREDDY
 Watch ya car for ya, Youngblood?

VIN
 Watch my car?

FREDDY
 Make sure nuttin happens to it.
 5 bucks.

VIN
 Shit man, this thing ain't worth 5
 bucks.

FREDDY
 Gimme 2 dollars, then.

VIN
 Nah, can't do it. Go ahead and
 steal the fuckin' thing.

FREDDY
 C'mon Youngblood. I'm a veteran.
 Gimme somethin, man.

Vin thinks for a quick moment before he opens the trunk.

VIN
 Hang on. I got you, man.

He rummages around the colorful band flyers and stacks of demo tapes, finally emerging with a 6-pack containing 5 empty bottles and a single full beer.

VIN (CONT'D)
 Here ya go, brother.

Vin hands over his last brew to the grateful Fred, who smiles a black-toothed grin.

FREDDY
Good lookin' out, Youngblood.

Fred cracks open the warm beer, draining half of it in one long pull. He belches and smacks his lips before taking another swig. Satisfied, Vin heads for the Lounge entrance, pulling open the red door as Fred calls after him:

FREDDY (CONT'D)
Don't worry, I'll make sure nobody
messes with your ride, rockstar.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Vin smiles and removes his shades, squinting as his eyes adjust to the dim light. He passes a cigarette machine and emerges from the cramped alcove, joining an afternoon mix of locals nursing beers and working stiffs tossing back shots on their lunch break.

INT. ADMIRAL MAIN STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Strobing lights bounce off an oversized disco ball as GAIL performs to the beat of the pulsating music. The blue-collar crowd cheers for the raven-haired dancer, raining singles and a few 5s onto the stage. With a practiced pounce, the lithe Hispanic woman scales the gleaming pole before gracefully spiraling down to collect her cash.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

From behind the bar, STEVE greets Vin in his gravelly voice.

STEVE
Hey, can I see some ID?

VIN
Oh. Uh, yeah. I called yesterday
about the bouncer job.

Vin flips open his wallet. Steve never actually checks the I.D. after realizing Vin is applying for a job.

STEVE
Ah, so you're the guy they're
talking about. Vin, right?

VIN
Yeah, man.

STEVE
I'm Steve, I manage the bar.

VIN
Nice to meet you.

STEVE
Likewise. I'll let Rizzo know
you're here.
(to bartender)
Hey Kathy, get him something.

Bartender KATHY nods as Steve heads to a table close to the stage, where the 50 year-old RIZZO entertains a quartet of scantily-clad dancers seeking tips and free drinks.

KATHY
What are ya drinking, hon?

VIN
He knows I'm still underage, right?

KATHY
So are most of the dancers. Nobody
cares, especially if you work here.

VIN
I'll take a beer, then.

KATHY
Just don't get shitfaced on the
clock. Brenda hates that.

VIN
Is she the one I talked to on the
phone about the job?

Kathy nods and pops open a bottle, handing it to Vin as Steve waves him over to Rizzo's table.

KATHY
You'll meet her later. She's gonna
love you...

Sporting a full Burt Reynolds moustache, sleek pompadour, and saddle shoes, the charismatic co-owner holds court like a celebrity. A worn paperback rests among the empty glasses and full ashtrays.

RIZZO
(chuckles)
Hey, look who it is: Joe Perry!

VIN
(laughs)
Man, I wish.

Vin reaches out to shake Rizzo's hand.

VIN (CONT'D)

I'm Vin. I called yesterday about the ad in the paper.

RIZZO

My wife told me about you. Name's Rizzo. Come, sit down. Lemme talk to ya for a minute.

Vin takes a seat and releases his ponytail. His long, dark mane draws admiring looks from the gathering.

RIZZO (CONT'D)

Look at that hair! Brenda told me you had the long hair. You're in a rock band, right? Gun Smoke or something, she said--

VIN

(nods)

It's Gun Shy. I'm the lead singer. Guess that makes me Steven Tyler.

RIZZO

Ha! Been reading about those guys. The Toxic Twins. I'm a huge music fan. We're gonna get along great.

VIN

We don't have a record deal yet, but we play every week and we're this close to getting signed.

RIZZO

Good for you, kid. Have fun, but be careful out there. It ain't like the good old days where ya caught Herpes or the clap. That AIDS shit will kill ya.

VIN

Guess my generation missed out on all that groovy free love stuff.

As they chat, the group is approached by a burly bouncer with a dark curly mullet. Wearing a polo shirt with 'Paul' stitched on the front and SECURITY on the back, he evaluates his potential coworker with a skeptical eye.

PAUL

What's with the fucking hair, Cochise?

VIN
I'm in a band.

PAUL
Brenda says you're from Deptford?

VIN
Yeah, so?

PAUL
I'm from Deptford.

VIN
No shit? That's cool, nice to meet
you. I'm Vin.

PAUL
Yeah, whatever. If you're from my
hometown, I gotta know one thing.
Do you have my back?

VIN
Hell yeah, man.
I'll watch your back.

PAUL
I don't need you to WATCH my back,
pretty boy. If you're gonna work
here, I need to know that you can
GET my back. BIG fuckin difference.

Paul grabs a barstool, raises it and suddenly charges forward. The startled group gasps in surprise and recoils.

Rising to defend himself, Vin sidesteps the aggressive bouncer and redirects his attacker's momentum. Using timing and leverage to his advantage, he tosses Paul on top of the bar. Pinning an elbow to his opponent's throat, Vin gently sets the barstool back on its feet.

VIN
We good?

PAUL
Yeah, we're good. Want a beer?

Suitably impressed with his new hire, Rizzo laughs heartily and claps Vin on the back while an amused Steve laughs at Paul as he climbs off the bar.

INT. ADMIRAL MAIN STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Gail finishes her set and crouches at the edge of the stage, counting bills and sizing up the applicant.

GAIL
Who's this?

RIZZO
New bouncer.

GAIL
Oh, I'm fucking him.

VIN
(surprised)
You are? She is?

RIZZO
Cut it out, Gail.

Stepping from the stage, the latina dancer prowls past Vin on her way to curl up on Rizzo's lap, kissing his forehead playfully before sipping from his drink.

RIZZO (CONT'D)
Now Vin, this is important, so pay attention.

Rizzo shoos Gail from his lap, tilts his oversized glasses and leans in to look Vin squarely in the eye. Lowering his voice, he speaks with a warm, fatherly gravitas.

RIZZO (CONT'D)
My old lady pays you boys very well to be courteous and professional to our paying customers.

VIN
I can do that, Boss.

RIZZO
But never fucking forget, your real job is to protect our girls from all these horny desperate schmucks.

VIN
I can do that, too.

RIZZO
So don't act like one of them, OK? Y'know what I'm sayin?

VIN
I think so.

RIZZO
I'm sayin don't shit where you eat.

VIN

Got it.

RIZZO

Good. Welcome to the Admiral.

The tipsy dancers clap and cheer happily as Gail grins and offers Vin a sly wink.

VIN

Does that mean I got the job?

RIZZO

Isn't that what I said? You start tomorrow. Want another beer?

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

3 young black men are smoking a blunt and preparing to enter the Admiral Lounge. One of them opens his wallet, nodding as he inspects the picture on his fake ID. Tossing the roach, the underage trio heads inside to try their luck.

After a moment, Freddy leaves his stoop and shambles over to pick up the smoldering remains of the blunt. He puffs away, coughing as he inhales deeply. He giggles and resumes his perch just as the red door bursts open. The disappointed faces of the 3 youths show that their plans have been foiled. Chowder escorts them out with an assist from Vin.

CHOWDER

For fuck's sake, Marcus! You pull this shit every week. I swear to God, it's like you're insulting my intelligence. Don't try this next door, either. Now get outta here.

The bouncers gently shoo the teens toward the busy street.

CHOWDER (CONT'D)

And stop using your uncle's driver's license! I went to fucking grade school with him, ya dumbass.

VIN

Really?

CHOWDER

I dunno, probably.

They laugh as the red door closes solidly behind them.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

VIN (V.O.)

I have to admit, my first night was a blur. I only had a couple beers, but between the lights, the music, and the girls, it was sensory overload. It wasn't until my second night that I noticed the smell.

Inside the dingy bar, Vin looks to the stained carpet in dismay and realizes he has stepped in something nasty.

VIN (V.O.)

The whole place stunk of smoke and spilled beer. It was a simmering powder keg of frustration and vice. Drunk, horny men waving stacks of untraceable cash at women they weren't allowed to touch.

Steve shakes his head sadly as a sympathetic barmaid hands Vin a pile of napkins.

VIN (V.O.)

That's Laurie, part-time bartender and full-time girlfriend of JJ, the Vice President of the Druids, the biker gang that supplies Steve, Rizzo and half the customers with crystal meth.

Waving thanks to Laurie, Vin steps gingerly past the bar and through the maze of tables.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

VIN (V.O.)

But what did I know? It was Friday night, the bar was packed, drinks were flowing, and the joint was jumping. The whole gang was there.

A motley crew of barflies and regulars glance at him as he passes. First up is an older fellow with a bushy moustache who is hagglng over the price of a portable CD player.

VIN (V.O.)

This is Charlie, but everyone pronounces it 'Chahlee'. You know that guy that always had something to sell off 'the back of the truck'? That's Chahlee.

Passing the DJ booth, we spot another nightly fixture trying to impress an oblivious dancer as she selects her tunes.

VIN (V.O.)

That's Jimmy Mac. Loves music as much as I do. Made me homemade mix tapes now and then, mostly blues like John Lee Hooker. He'd always try to talk to the dancers about music, but they couldn't care less.

Weaving his way through the club, Vin bumps into a table, jostling a double scotch and soda. A sophisticated gentleman steadies his wobbly beverage as Vin apologizes.

VIN (V.O.)

Then there was Mr. French. Quiet dude who looked just like the guy from the old TV show 'Family Affair'. Always tipped the girls well and used to carry this cane that pulled apart into a sword. I'm not kidding, a fucking sword.

Vin finally reaches the Men's room door and cracks it open, preparing to enter before turning to speak directly to the camera and breaking the 4th wall.

VIN (CONT'D)

(to camera)

Oh, and everyone was doing drugs in the bathroom. EVERYONE.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Pinching his nose, Vin lifts his head from the porcelain after sniffing up the remnants of a line. Paul stands next to him in the cramped stall, holding a baggie and rubbing his teeth as Vin hands over the rolled-up 20.

PAUL

Pretty good, right?

VIN

(dubious)

If you say so--

PAUL

It's more consistent than JJ's, I don't care what Brenda says. And the chick I get it from is smokin hot.

VIN

That's cool. I mean, coke's never really been my thing, you know?

PAUL

So what are you, a fucking pothead? Some kind of longhaired heavy metal Kung-Fu Rastafarian?

VIN

Not really. I mean, I party, but I always try to take care of my voice. That stuff kills my throat.

PAUL

I can kinda respect that, I guess. What's the name of your band again? Gumshoe, right?

VIN

Funny.

PAUL

Cumshot! It's Cumshot, isn't it?

VIN

Is that why you're an electrician, because comedy didn't work out? Don't quit your day job.

PAUL

And now, ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce the Grammy-winning lead vocalist of Cumshot.

VIN

Just gonna keep beating this dead horse, aren't you?

PAUL

Put your hands together for the Man with the Golden Throat himself--

VIN

Get it out of your system.

PAUL

The one, the only: My cousin Vinny!

VIN

You're such an asshole.

PAUL

Let's hear it for him, folks.

As the men leave, there is the faint sound of slow clapping from the corner stall just before the occupant flushes.

INT. BATHROOM STALL - CONTINUOUS

The young girl rises from her knees, ashamed and humiliated at having to perform the degrading act. She tearfully reaches for the small baggie he dangles, before he snatches it back and laughs. Her eyes pleading, she pries it from his hand, dashing from the stall, desperate to fix herself.

Jumbo reaches into his jean shorts to check a vibrating pager. He tucks a bundle of heroin into a sneaker while pulling up his sock, which hides a folded straight razor.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - MOMENTS LATER

The young dancer sits unsteadily at the bar, completely ignoring the lovestruck sap buying her drinks. Comfortably numb, she nearly nods off before the ash of her cigarette falls and breaks the narcotic trance.

She slurs an apology and attempts to ditch the customer but slides off the barstool and crumples to the floor. A good Samaritan steps in, picking her up as Vin rushes over to help steady her. The bartender tends to the semiconscious dancer and Vin thanks the kind stranger with a handshake.

VIN (V.O.)

That's Ken Rivolli. He's an off-duty Camden police officer. He'd stop in most nights to grab a drink and just check on things. He cared about being a good cop, but more importantly he was a good person. Pretty soon me, him, and Paul became the best of friends.

Another young bartender takes the intoxicated girl by the arm and leads her to the dancer's dressing room. With caramel skin and an innocent smile, Vin is instantly smitten the moment he looks into SAMI's beautiful brown eyes.

VIN (V.O.)

And then I met Sami.

VIN (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Hey.

SAMI

(smiles back)

Hey yourself.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A visibly upset Brenda Cordova stands chain-smoking and watching the impaired girl on the surveillance cameras. Steve enters the office with a concerned frown on his face.

STEVE
You seeing this?

BRENDA
Yeah I saw. She's new, isn't she?

STEVE
(nods)
I'll get one of the bartenders to give her a ride home tonight.

Furious, Brenda stalks over to the desk and snorts a thick rail of cocaine. Sniffing, she seethes with rage.

BRENDA
It's that fat fucking piece of shit again. I know it is. Go tell Chowder to throw his ass out.

STEVE
Ok, but he'll just go next door.

BRENDA
I don't care where he goes, just get him the hell out of here.

Steve nods and turns to leave as Brenda leans over and sniffs up another line of blow.

BRENDA (CONT'D)
And Steven--

STEVE
Yeah?

BRENDA
Make sure the boys are on their toes tonight.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - LATER

Vin escorts petite brunette dancer SANDY to her car.

SANDY
All you gotta do is look out for us at work, walk us out to our cars at the end of the night--

Sandy pulls a 20 dollar bill from her purse, tucks it down the front of Vin's jeans and kisses him on the cheek.

SANDY (CONT'D)

And we tip you.

VIN

Works for me. Be safe getting home.

Jumbo steps from behind a parked minivan and makes a beeline for Sandy's car. The agile big man moves with surprising speed in Vin's direction.

SANDY

What the hell do you want?

VIN

Hey, what's your problem?

JUMBO

You're the one with the problem now, bitch.

Swinging wildly, Jumbo telegraphs the haymaker. Vin reflexively raises an arm to block, deflecting the savage blow as adrenaline kicks in and muscle memory takes over.

Vin's fist fires forward, delivering a straight right hand to the face that momentarily stuns his attacker. He follows up with a looping left hook to the temple that connects solidly. Circling, Vin delivers a crushing roundhouse kick to the knee that sends Jumbo sprawling to the pavement, gasping and holding a broken nose.

SANDY

Good. Serves ya right, ya fat fuck.

VIN

You done, big boy?

SANDY

Oh shit.

Aghast, Sandy points at Vin's arm with a look of horror. He stares down in confusion to see his forearm sliced opened cleanly to the bone. No blood flowing yet, just raw white meat and sinew poking out from tan skin.

JUMBO

(laughs)

Gotcha, motherfucker.

Lying on the ground next to Jumbo is a box cutter. Vin kicks it away while a terrified Sandy rushes back inside to summon help. Freddy rises from his familiar spot on the stoop.

FREDDY

Yo, that was fucked up. You aight, Youngblood?

JUMBO

(menacing)

Stay the fuck out of it, old man. You didn't see shit.

FREDDY

Go to hell, you ugly sumbitch. I seent the whole goddamn thing.

The rookie bouncer grips his injured arm, holding the wound closed as a trickle of blood begins to leak and searing pain arrives in a rush. Crimson drops spatter down the leg of his jeans, soaking in and staining the denim black.

VIN

Fuck. I just bought these today.

Grimacing, Vin waves his good arm at the wailing siren and flashing lights of an approaching patrol car. Fred retreats to the shadows as 2 wary officers emerge with guns drawn.

VIN (V.O.)

So the cops show up, handcuff Jumbo and put him in the back of the car. But since it was so hot, they left a window open while they were inside taking my statement. Somehow Jumbo crawled through it and simply walked away into the night.

INT. GRANDMOM'S HOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

In the dining room of his Grandmother's modest house, Vin and his bandmates ALAN and JEFF sit at a table loaded with Italian food. Pasta, sausage, and meatballs are passed around as the long-haired rockers stuff their faces alongside Vin's extended family.

VIN (V.O.)

Now, for Italians, Sunday dinner is sacred. Every weekend, Grandmom would invite the whole family over and feed us all like kings. It was her way of keeping the tradition alive, and the guys always looked forward to it after band practice.

Fresh from the kitchen, the tiny matriarch surveys the table and sets down some garlic bread.

GRANDMA

Make sure you all get enough to eat. There's plenty. Look how skinny my Vinny is.

VIN

What're you talking about? I gained 5 pounds since I walked in the front door.

ALAN

(mouth full)

For real, this is amazing.

GRANDMA

Someone's got to feed you boys.

JEFF

I'll be back tomorrow, Mrs. C.

GRANDMA

So, how's the music going?

VIN

Good. We've been opening for some pretty well known bands lately and even getting airplay on local radio. We'll be recording our first album soon, and we're thinking of calling it 'After Dark'.

GRANDMA

That's nice, maybe one day it'll make you a little money.

VIN

(cheerful)

Maybe, Grandmom. Maybe.

Taking off her apron, Grandma touches Vin's bandaged arm.

GRANDMA

That better not be a tattoo under there. You promised.

VIN

It's not. Cut my arm at work and had to get a few stitches.

GRANDMA
 (concerned)
Per un attimo mi hai fatto paura.
 You've got to be more careful.
 Construction work is so dangerous.

Stifling a laugh, Al nearly chokes on his second helping of ziti. Vin nudges him with an elbow.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
 Are you working at that--
 nightclub again tonight?

VIN
 Yes, working at the club tonight.
 Matter of fact, I gotta run.

VIN (V.O.)
*Now, in her mind, The Admiral was
 just some regular dance club from
 back in her South Philly youth. The
 truth would have broken her heart,
 and I didn't want her to worry.*

The assembled musicians stand and prepare to head out.

GRANDMA
 When are you going to find a nice
 girl and settle down?

Vin looks to the camera and breaks the 4th wall.

VIN (V.O.)
Now, there's a thought.

CUT TO: a dancer doing a split and sliding down the pole.

VIN
 I will, Grandmom.
 There's a girl at work.

GRANDMA
 Does this girl have a name?

VIN
 Her name's Sami.
 I invited her to our next show.

JEFF
 There's supposed to be scouts for
 the record labels there.

VIN
I know we're gonna get signed.
Soon. I can feel it.

ALAN
Of course we will.
We're gonna be rock stars, man!

From across the table, AUNT GINNY sarcastically chimes in:

AUNT GINNY
Hey Rockstar, take the trash out
for your Grandparents on your way
to MTV, OK?

VIN
Of course, Aunt Gin.

ALAN
(wipes mouth)
Can I have a cannoli, Gran?

GRANDMA
Leave the napkin. Take the cannoli.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - EVENING

Exiting the car, Vin prepares for his shift. Lifting the leg of his jeans, he slips a combat knife inside his boot. He pops the trunk and removes a construction pick-axe. Tamping it on the ground, the steel head slides off, leaving a solid 42-inch wooden handle.

Vin writes the word 'RELAX' on the handle in thick black marker, grips his peacemaker and slaps it in his palm with a satisfying smack.

VIN
Not tonight, motherfuckers.

Freddy looks on approvingly as Vin tosses the chunk of metal back in the trunk, closes it and heads to the red door with a look of grim determination.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

He looks around the foyer for a few seconds, stashes his new equalizer behind the cigarette machine and enters the bar.

INT. GALAXY DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: 5 MINUTES TO SHOWTIME

The cramped space is dimly lit, covered in graffiti and papered over with band flyers. Next to a tattered loveseat, 5 anxious young men stand in a loose circle. Alan catches his fellow band members up on his venereal woes.

ALAN

Had to tell my Mom. Made me go to the drugstore with her. It sucked.

VIN

Told you not to mess with that girl at the bar. You didn't listen, man.

ALAN

It was only a hand job under the bar! Really didn't think I could catch crabs like that.

JEFF:

Wait, you're 23. Why is your Mom still taking you to the drugstore?

ALAN

Shut up. She says: Go on, tell the pharmacist what you need and why!

VIN

Next time listen to your friends. Or just tell her to wear a glove.

The room bursts into nervous laughter, releasing the group's pent-up energy. They get loose, breathing deeply and settling into performance mode.

VIN (CONT'D)

Well, this is it.

ALAN

Game time, baby.

JEFF

Did you see those A&R guys?

ALAN

There's at least 3 out there.

A door knock informs them it's time to take the stage.

VIN

Let's kick their asses.

EXT. GALAXY NIGHTCLUB - LATER

The roadies load up equipment after the show while the sweaty performers shake hands, smoke and solicit female phone numbers.

A lively post-concert crowd streams from the building and mulls around the parking lot, waiting for the afterparty to ramp up as the bandmates share a joint.

JEFF

We fucking killed.

ALAN

Slayed. Destroyed.

VIN

Yeah, we were on point tonight.

ALAN

Oh, and I saw that bartender chick you invited.

JEFF

Front row. She's pretty hot, man.

VIN

Shame she had to leave.
I'll see her at work, though.

ALAN

Yeah, boo fucking hoo. Guess you'll have to settle for hooking up with one of the strippers.

JEFF

They prefer to be called exotic dancers.

VIN

(laughs)

I can't believe Paulie brought that many girls with him.

ALAN

That guy is my new hero.
He should be our Manager.

JEFF

The A&R guys were hitting on those chicks all night.

VIN

I just hope they were listening.

ALAN

Amen, brother. C'mon, let's go
drink a beer or 12.

With fans and well wishers swarming around, the band heads back inside the club to sell demo tapes and hand out flyers promoting the next show.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Vin, Steve and the bouncers are gathered in Brenda's cluttered office. She paces in an ornate silk kimono while smoking and biting her lacquered nails. On the messy desk sits a silver Tiffany mirror coated in powdery residue.

VIN (V.O.)

Brenda would call us in for a security meeting every week to let us know what was going on. Let us know which girls quit, which ones got fired, and to update us on the nonstop drama with her ex-husband next door. But mainly it was just Brenda checking up on her boys.

BRENDA

I hope they shoot him on sight.

STEVE

Rivolli said he's probably hiding out somewhere in Kensington. Philly PD's looking for him, but you know how that goes.

VIN (V.O.)

She was like a schizophrenic Mother figure who was also trying to seduce you. All complimentary and adoring until she got REALLY high. Once we found her sweeping the foyer topless muttering: 'I can't find my purse. Boys, help me find my purse'.

BRENDA

Cocksucker better hope the cops find his ass before my people do.

VIN (V.O.)

She could also be really cutthroat too, and she made damn sure we were looking out for her bar, her money and her drugs. Like Jekyll and Hyde. Very sweet, but volatile.

(MORE)

VIN (CONT'D)

*She could smile at you one minute
and have you fired or beaten to a
pulp out back the next.*

BRENDA

Don't you worry Vin, that son of a
bitch will end up in a fucking
landfill for what he did to you.

STEVE

Probably several.

PAUL

Told you Cochise, don't let anyone
get within arms reach.

VIN

Don't worry, it won't happen again.

BRENDA

Now, we've got a bachelor party
coming in from Atlantic City next
weekend. I don't want shit getting
out of hand like last time, so I
called in some backup.

STEVE

Tommy's gonna come help out.

CHOWDER

I thought he retired.

PAUL

Why? We don't need him.

BRENDA

Really? Look what happened!

PAUL

Oh c'mon, it's just a few stitches.

BRENDA

I don't care.

PAUL

Besides the kid can handle himself.

VIN

Thanks, man.

PAUL

(grins)
Shut the fuck up, rookie.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE - NIGHT

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

A trio of drunken, 80's preppy frat boys are getting too familiar with one of the dancers, and a stocky, dark-haired bouncer in a Member's Only jacket approaches to break it up.

VIN (V.O.)

Now, Tommy Orr was something of a legend at the Admiral. He was without a doubt the most feared and respected bouncer in Camden and Gloucester long before I showed up.

As she resists, one of the men tries to slap the squirming girl's rear, only to have his wrist caught in mid-air.

VIN (V.O.)

You wouldn't know it by looking at him, but Tommy was a Black belt in Judo and a half-dozen other martial arts. He was the real deal. Someone you didn't want to fuck with.

His buddies rise in protest as the bouncer painfully twists the thumb of the belligerent guest, pulling him from his seat as the distressed woman flees to the dressing room.

VIN (V.O.)

Everyone knew not to test him.

One of the men takes an ill-advised step forward and brandishes his beer as a weapon.

VIN (V.O.)

Well, almost everyone.

With his paralyzed captive still gasping in agony, Tommy calmly swings a raised foot in a smooth arc, placing it directly under the chin of the would-be aggressor. After a moment, the man reconsiders, sets the bottle down and sheepishly raises his hands.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A summer shower cools the asphalt jungle. Freddy remains huddled on his stoop as the light drizzle tapers off. Steam rises to blanket the Boulevard, giving the grimy city a surreal, fairytale atmosphere. Vin peeks out from the red metal door and looks to the sky.

He holds it open and Sami emerges, smiling. The couple chats and flirts on the way to her waiting car.

VIN
I'm glad you were there.
It was nice seeing a familiar face
in the crowd.

SAMI
Sorry I had to leave.
I asked Paul to grab me a demo
tape, but he never did.

VIN
I know, I told him not to.

SAMI
What? Why the hell not?

VIN
Figured I'd wait and give you one
personally.

Vin pulls a cassette tape from his pocket. He flips it over to reveal scribbled writing on the paper insert.

VIN (CONT'D)
It's autographed.
See, there's my name right there.

SAMI
(laughs)
Ooh, a collector's item!
I'll treasure it forever.

VIN
And that's my phone number.

SAMI
What would I need that for?

VIN
Well, I was thinking that we could
hang out some time.

SAMI
Ok. Where? Where would we go?

VIN
How about dinner and a movie?

SAMI
Not really my thing.

VIN
Blockbuster and a 6 pack?

SAMI
Now you're talking.

Bathed in a halo of streetlight and shrouded in mist, Vin leans in and the couple share a magical first kiss.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

A stray cat emerges from cover and saunters over to Fred, who sits watching the young lovers. He reaches down to pet the tabby with a wistful, slightly bittersweet smile.

FREDDY
That's what I'm talkin about. Go ahead, Youngblood.

INT. COMMERCIAL PRINTING STORE - THE NEXT DAY

Vin enters and greets his bandmate Jeff, who works behind the counter making copies. He places stacks of hot pink and neon green paper in boxes. Walking past holding one of the colorful flyers, 2 young ladies giggle and look over at the bandmates. Jeff waves and gives a smile as they exit.

VIN
Who was that?

JEFF
Those chicks saw us play live and are now very big fans.

Jeff holds up a flyer advertising the band's next gig.

JEFF (CONT'D)
They will both be coming to the show at the Cell Block next month.

VIN
What's with the fluorescent flyers?

JEFF
Marketing 101. Being seen before anyone else gets us noticed. Plus, this neon paper is dirt cheap.

VIN
If you say so.

JEFF
Seen our billboard on 295 yet?

VIN
Wait, what?

JEFF
(laughs)
Yup. SOMEBODY climbed up onto a billboard on 295 North and draped a giant tarp over it. It's been up there for like, 3 weeks now.

VIN
Holy shit! Hope the cops don't come knocking on our doors for that--

JEFF
We can't control what our FANS do.

VIN
True, and it IS pretty fuckin cool.

JEFF
It RULES. I've already had like, 30 people ask me 'Hey, aren't you guys the billboard band?' So yeah, it's definitely getting some attention.

VIN
Wow, I don't even know what to say.

JEFF
Don't say anything. Seriously. Just be grateful and start plastering the telephone poles with these.

A grinning Jeff hands over 3 boxes of flyers.

VIN
Ok, I'm on it. Thanks, man.

EXT. HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

A road crew resurfaces a residential street under the scorching sun. Deafening jackhammers relentlessly split the baked asphalt before falling silent.

In hard hat, orange vest and boots, roommate Chris smashes chunks of gooey blacktop with a pickaxe while Vin shovels the remains into a 6-wheeled dump truck. Sweat dripping, the duo pauses to grab a drink and catch their breath.

CHRIS
Dude, you're an idiot.

VIN
Care to elaborate?

CHRIS
A girlfriend?
If I was you, I'd be bringing home
a different chick every night of
the week like your boy Paulie.

VIN
Uh huh. Sure you would.

A Camden City police cruiser approaches, slows, and pulls to the opposite curb. Officer KEN waves to the foreman.

CHRIS
Hey, is that for you?

EXT. HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION SITE - MOMENTS LATER

Leaning on the car's hood, Ken updates Vin while his partner BRIAN reads the incident report inside the car.

KEN
We'll get him, Vin.
I promise. You have my word.

VIN
I really appreciate it.

BRIAN
Jumbo's pulled this shit before.

KEN
He'll be back in the area soon
enough. It's only a matter of time.

BRIAN
Big Dave can't be too happy with
him, either.

A call comes across the radio. Brian responds while Vin gets the lowdown on his new friend's romantic life.

VIN
Did you start seeing Monique?
Outside of work, I mean.

KEN
For the first time in forever, I
feel like maybe I found a good one.

VIN

Good for you, man. I know what you mean. OK, so on to the important stuff. What'd you think of the rough mix of the new tracks?

KEN

Loved the tunes. They're as good as anything on the radio right now. Whitesnake, Skid Row, Bon Jovi. You guys are going to make it, I can feel it. 1992 is going to be the year of Gun Shy!

Finishing the radio call, Brian taps the windshield, alerting Ken, who hustles to take the driver's seat.

VIN

You coming by tomorrow night? Got a bachelor party, we might need you to stop by for a visit.

KEN

Can't, I got the kids and the ex is bustin my balls again.

VIN

Women. Can't live with them, pass the beer nuts.

KEN

That woman, I swear to God--

Putting the cruiser in gear, he flips on the police lights.

KEN (CONT'D)

She's gonna be the death of me.

VIN (V.O.)

Sadly, in the end, he was right.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - EVENING

Vin exits the passenger door of Paul's muscle car.

VIN

Thanks for pickin me up.

PAUL

(lights cigarette)

Your car's a piece of shit. You should shoot that fucking thing and put it out of its misery. And gimme 5 bucks for gas, Pocahontas.

Handing over the cash, Vin notices a silver Cadillac rocking slightly as it sits parked across 2 spaces. The muffled sounds of a heated argument can be heard over the funk music playing inside. As they walk, Vin looks on with a mix of curiosity and mild concern.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I fucking hate bachelor parties.

VIN

Isn't that Tommy guy coming in to give us a hand?

PAUL

We're gonna need all the help we can get. Steve told me it's a bunch of mob douchebags from AC.

The door of the Cadillac swings open wildly, and a working girl desperately climbs from the plush leather interior. A powerful hand reaches across to grab her, snags her dress and yanks, violently dragging the woman back into the car.

VIN

Yo, what the fuck?

PAUL

That's Cadillac.

VIN

The guy's name is Cadillac? What's he, like, a pimp or something?

The bruised streetwalker reappears, screaming obscenities and fighting her way out of the big car.

PAUL

What do YOU think, genius?

She straightens her wig, wipes away tears and heads for the street, hoping she can earn enough to avoid another beating.

VIN

I think any man who hits a woman is a fucking coward.

PAUL

It is what it is.
(flicks cig)
Leave it alone unless you want to catch a bullet.

Vin briefly looks back in anger at the Caddy's dark windshield as the red door closes behind him.

After a moment, the V8 roars to life. The Alpine blasts classic funk as custom headlights flip around. Lurching forward, it waits to merge into the heavy weekend traffic.

Riding a beater 10 speed bike, a smiling Fred coasts to a stop at the driver's door. The window glides down and sweet smoke wafts from the cabin. The men greet one another with an elaborate handshake. Blinged-out fingers offer Fred the lit blunt. He happily accepts, toking deeply as Cadillac slips him 5 dollars.

FREDDY

God bless you, my nephew.

The tinted glass rises and the big car pulls away.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE OFFICE - LATER

His dark hair now silver at the temples, TOMMY shows off his thumb-lock technique to Vin by demonstrating it on an uncooperative Paul. Lean and fit in his 50's with hard features and the kind eyes of a grandfather, Tom speaks with the calm, lethal confidence of a skilled man who has nothing left to prove.

TOMMY

(twist)

Just keep the pressure here.

PAUL

OW!

VIN

Where?

TOMMY

(squeezes)

Here!

PAUL

OW! Goddamn it!

VIN

Can you show me again?

TOMMY

Oh, sure.

PAUL

C'mon. OW! Y'know, fuck you guys--

TOMMY

So, just remember this little trick
the next time some joker comes at
you swinging a barstool.

Tom releases the hold. Paul gasps painfully and shakes his hand free, rubbing his aching thumb to restore circulation. Vin enjoys a hearty laugh at his pal's expense before Paul points to his bandaged arm and smirks.

PAUL

What the hell are you laughing at,
Slash? Ya fucking one armed bandit.

At her desk, a worried Brenda hangs up the phone. She gathers Steve and the others to catch everyone up to speed.

BRENDA

Alright, our VIPs left the Taj
Mahal about a half-hour ago.

STEVE

Thing is, if they won tonight,
they're gonna be even more drunk
and obnoxious than usual.

BRENDA

But if they lost, I'm stuck with 20
pissed-off goombahs taking it out
on my girls all night.

STEVE

I think we know a couple of them.
Vic DeLuca and Tony Lombardo.

TOMMY

The Saber Vending guys?

CHOWDER

'Saber Vending'? Ain't that what's
on the cigarette machine out front?

TOMMY

They own half the vending machines
from here to Cape May.

BRENDA

Don't even get me started. Those
goddamn crooks. Can't trust them.

STEVE

Take a thousand in quarters alone
outta here every month.

BRENDA

Thieves, that's what they are.
Bloodsuckers.

CHOWDER

Pretty sure them guys were in here
like 2 months ago, drunk as shit.

PAUL

I remember. Tried to do flaming
vodka shots with the Russkies.

BRENDA

(scowls)

A meesa masheena on every one of
those Communist dogs.

VIN

Wait. Russians? In Camden?

STEVE

They smuggle Ukrainian girls into
Philly, take their passports, lock
them up here and make them dance,
do porn, or turn tricks in AC.

VIN

Like a sex slave? That's sick.

BRENDA

No, that's evil.

TOMMY

Human trafficking is what it is.

BRENDA

And Steven, make sure you keep the
goddamned guns out of here tonight.

STEVE

I was getting to that. Guys, we're
gonna pat down everyone coming in.

CHOWDER

Yeah sure, that'll go over well.

TOMMY

Come on, you guys know the drill.
Remember what I taught you. Be
polite, but be firm.

PAUL

I can see it now: 'Hey Mr. Scarfo, can you and Skinny Joey leave your pieces in the car'?

BRENDA

I'm serious, last thing I need is more goddamn bullet holes to patch.

TOMMY

Hey Brenda, you remember Hopalong Rizzo? Pew! Pew! Pew!

BRENDA

Oy gevalt, what a night.

VIN

What happened?

STEVE

A bat got inside and flew around.

TOMMY

We couldn't get it with the broom, so Rizzo tried to shoot it.

BRENDA

A miracle he didn't kill me.

Almost on cue, a disheveled Rizzo staggers from the office bathroom, loosening the expensive silk tie binding his arm.

RIZZO

You're lucky I ran outta bullets.

Eyes glassy and dilated from the speedball, he rolls down his shirt sleeve, swaying gently as he adds nonchalantly:

RIZZO (CONT'D)

2 limos just pulled up out front.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

A collection of stoic made men and fist-bumping young guys pile out of dual stretch limousines wearing tuxedos, smoking cigars and passing champagne bottles. The cocky husband-to-be jokes around with his spiky-haired paisans as the limo drivers park, awaiting further instruction.

One of the partygoers motions to his ankle and the Best Man shakes his head. Frowning, the groomsman walks to the back of the Lincoln and bends down. Hiking up his suit pants, he removes a small pistol from its leg holster, and confirms it's loaded.

Looking around to see if he's being observed, he reaches under the car and carefully balances the gun atop the rear tire before rejoining the group at the red door.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

Fred's head pops up from inside the dumpster. Munching on a discarded buffalo wing, he tosses the bones to the scrawny cat, making it clear he's been watching the whole time.

INT. ADMIRAL MAIN STAGE - LATER

Gail sets up a folding chair, twirling handcuffs while Sandy leads the blindfolded groom stumbling onto the stage. Clinking shotglasses, his hard-drinking buddies hoot and holler enthusiastically, shouting 'You're Unbelievable!' as they sing along with the one-hit wonder.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

Steve huddles with his bouncers to get a status report.

CHOWDER

I'm tellin ya, we checked.

STEVE

Everyone was clean?

TOMMY

One guy had a leg holster but it was empty.

VIN

I saw that.

STEVE

Think he's still got it on him?

PAUL

Where, in his drawers?

TOMMY

Maybe, you never know these days.

CHOWDER

You want us to ask him to turn his head and cough?

PAUL

Hope he left the safety on. It's all fun and games until you shoot yourself in the dick.

INT. ADMIRAL MAIN STAGE - LATER

Eyes covered and hands cuffed behind his back, the party's guest of honor grins wickedly as a succession of dancers take turns seductively gyrating and grinding against him. The raucous crowd makes it rain while Sandy bounces on his lap and Gail pulls his face into her chest. The women share a long kiss as they trade places straddling the bound groom.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

STEVE

What do you think?

TOMMY

So far, so good.

VIN

Holster dude and his buddy started getting a little touchy-feely.

STEVE

Might have to cut those guys off.

TOMMY

(to Vin)

You did the right thing over there.

Filling drink orders, Sami smiles at Vin and hands Tom a diet soda with lemon. The world-weary pro takes a sip before resting a paternal hand on the rookie's shoulder.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Next time let me handle it.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A woozy Rizzo slouches on the leather sofa when a fluttering copy of People magazine whacks him across the face.

BRENDA

Absolutely not! What am I, an ATM?

Brenda sits at her desk in reading glasses, chopping blow with a credit card and frowning at a stack of overdue bills.

RIZZO

C'mon Bren, I'll get it back.

BRENDA

Bullshit. That's what you said last time! For Christ's sake, I can barely keep the goddamn lights on.

RIZZO

We can double our money. Come on baby, it's a sure thing!

BRENDA

You'll get bupkes from me. To hell with those Guinea bastards. Pay your own goddamn debts.

RIZZO

Mikey's right, after you took his club you became a stone cold bitch.

BRENDA

Go next door then. I divorced one schmuck, think I won't leave your ungrateful ass too? You know I love you very very much--

In one pass, she ingests a heart-stopping amount of coke.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

But I don't NEED you, Riz.

RIZZO

Aha, touché. Love you too.

Rizzo heads for the restroom as Brenda taps out more blow.

RIZZO (CONT'D)

(mutters)

Alte makhsheyfe.

SUPER: Old witch

BRENDA

I heard that.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE - LATER

The older businessmen sit at the bar sipping bourbon and anisette, tipping handsomely as the girls fawn over them.

Near the stage, the jubilant mood has turned darker and a bit sinister. The drunken partiers have become progressively more aggressive with the dancers, keeping the bouncers busy.

2 vulgar men offer the women cash and coke in return for oral sex. Most refuse outright but soon, one accepts. The guys high-5 as the trio slips quietly into the bathroom.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - SAME TIME

Tom and Steve watch the bouncers police the guests when Brenda comes marching out of her office sounding the alarm.

BRENDA
Goddammit, ain't youse watchin'?

STEVE
What now?

BRENDA
2 guys took Cyndi into the john
while you're over here running your
mouths.

TOMMY
How'd I miss that? Must be old age.

STEVE
Think she's hustling?

BRENDA
Who the hell knows?
Have Paul get her out of there.

Seeing him occupied, Tom stands and sets down his soda.

TOMMY
He's busy, Bren. I'll handle it.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

A tearful Cyndi emerges from the bathroom with arms crossed and is led by Kathy to Brenda's office.

The lavatory door muffles the sounds of a scuffle before it bursts open again. Tom ejects one man with a kick to the seat of his pants while holding his pal's arm bent behind his back. He flashes a bloodstained grin from a split lip.

TOMMY
Little shits took a swing at me.

His fellow bouncers rally around Tommy, converging to grab the offenders and shove them out the fire exit with extreme prejudice. Their fellow partygoers object, shouting drunken threats as tensions rise and emotions start to boil over.

INT. ADMIRAL DJ BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Brenda storms up to the deejay booth and snatches the microphone. The thumping music stops abruptly.

BRENDA (P.A.)
That's it, party's over! Alla youse
get the hell out! We're closed.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

Mumbled curses and groans of disappointment from the surly crowd as they gather jackets and finish drinks.

INT. ADMIRAL MAIN STAGE - SAME TIME

The blindfolded GROOM is released by Gail. As he exits the stage, he grabs a handful of bills from the girls' pile of cash, prompting Sandy to cry out in protest. Vin stops him.

VIN
Put it back.

The groom defiantly scoffs and rudely flips Vin off.

GROOM
Fuck you. Make me.

Vin grabs the middle finger and yanks, twisting it at an unnatural angle. Eyes wide with pain, the shocked groom drops the money and takes a swipe at Vin. Leaning back to avoid the punch, the young bouncer gives a firm squeeze. An audible popping noise is heard as the joint dislocates.

The groom howls and reaches with his free hand to claw viciously at Vin's eyes. In response, he bears down, breaking the man's finger with a sickening snap.

The high-pitched scream instantly draws the attention of his rowdy mates. The dismayed groom whimpers and raises his wounded right hand, bawling openly as its middle digit flops over backward, turning purple as it hangs useless and limp.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Pandemonium erupts and the minor fracas becomes a full-on donnybrook. The outraged mob descends on Vin in a hail of swinging fists and flying beers.

Dodging a thrown chair, Chowder lowers his shoulder and bulldozes a pair of belligerent men to the floor before kicking and shoving them toward the exit.

Cutting a swath through the scrum, Tommy calmly and methodically dispatches several combatants. With a series of quick, snakelike strikes, he buries tightly-bunched fingertips into his adversaries' windpipes. The men fall in succession like dominos, choking and holding their throats.

Bottle in hand, the Best Man sneaks around to attack Vin from behind. Paul catches him mid-swing, elbowing him across the nose before mashing his forehead into a tabletop.

Tom heel-stomps the shin of his final challenger as the bouncers join up. Vin stands bruised but unbloodied next to his coworkers, looking out at the sea of groaning, alcohol-fueled berserkers eager to begin Round 2.

CHOWDER

Hey Vin, you aight?

VIN

Yeah, I'm cool.

PAUL

Good thing they didn't have box cutters, huh? Vin's defenseless against fat guys with razors.

VIN

(nervous laugh)

Shut the fuck up.

TOMMY

(chuckles)

Told you to let me handle it, kid.

4 bouncers stare down 12 furious drunks, each side waiting for the other to make a move and provoke a new wave of violence. Creeping forward menacingly, the vindictive bachelor party seems poised to swarm the security team.

A deafening GUNSHOT freezes everyone and silences the room.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

Rizzo stands atop the bar brandishing an old revolver.

RIZZO

Go ahead. Make my day,
motherfuckers.

From the DJ booth, Brenda repeats her warning.

BRENDA (P.A.)

Did yas not hear what I said?
We're closed! Go next door, go down
the street, I don't care.
Get the fuck out.

STEVE

You heard the lady. Bar's closed.
Let's move it on outside, fellas.

RIZZO

D'ya feel lucky? Well, do ya punk?

BRENDA (P.A.)

Steven, for the love of God, get
that goddamned gun away from him.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

With a few unruly exceptions, the remaining customers head for the door in an orderly manner. Tom chats amicably with the older mafioso and it seems as if cooler heads have prevailed, at least temporarily.

Juvenile taunts and wounded pride provoke an angry outburst from inside the cramped alcove, causing a human bottleneck mere feet from the door. On his way out, the injured groom kicks in the plexiglass front panel of the cigarette machine. The rapacious crowd snatches up the packs of free smokes by the handful.

Clearly irritated, Tom wades back into the teeming masses to clear the exit. An anonymous hand reaches through to point the pistol at the back of Tom's head while he is distracted. Sharp firecracker POP of a gunshot.

Crowd scatters. Initial confusion and panic gives way to dreadful realization.

CHOWDER

Oh fuck.

STEVE

(to bartenders)
Call 911 right now.

INT. ADMIRAL DJ BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

BRENDA (P.A.)

Tommy?

Struggling to see from the obstructed view of the DJ booth, Brenda's hopeful tone fades into a sob of despair before she throws down the microphone with a raw, guttural scream.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

Paul arrives in seconds, bullying his way through to Tom's side, kneeling to cradle his mentor's twitching body. Salt-and-pepper hair flecked with bits of bone and brain matter, Paul tries to hold Tom's shattered skull together with his bare hands. A gush of blood pulses from Tom's pulverized eye socket, leaking through Paul's fingers and down to a dark, spreading pool on the stained carpet.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - SUNRISE

The red door is crisscrossed with yellow tape. Uniformed officers mill about while detectives finish taking Fred's statement and huddle up to compare notes. Vin, Paul, and Ken emerge from the fire exit into a hazy, humid dawn. Surveying the crime scene in disheveled street clothes, Ken tries to calm and reassure his friends.

KEN

He's a fighter. EMS said his vitals are strong. They took him to the trauma unit over at Cooper. It was touch-and-go for a few minutes, but he's stable now. There's a good chance he'll pull through.

PAUL

(bitter)

Yeah, blind and brain damaged. Thanks but no thanks.

VIN

At least he's alive.

PAUL

(angry)

Really? He gets to spend the rest of his life as a fucking vegetable! You call that living? FUCK YOU!

KEN

Hey man, take it easy.

VIN

I'm sorry, Paulie. I really am. I know he's like an uncle to you.

PAUL

And that! Stop. Just fucking stop.

VIN

Stop what?

PAUL

Stop calling me Paulie, it bugs the shit outta me. My name is Paul. From now on, that's what you fucking call me. Got it?

VIN

Sure. Whatever you say, Paulina.

PAUL
Haha. Very funny, motherfucker.

KEN
Oh c'mon, lighten up Francis.

Paul tries to light a cigarette, but the tremors in his shaking hands make it impossible. Vin takes the Zippo and gives him an assist. Paul's anger fades as he smokes.

PAUL
Fucking smartasses.
I hate you both.

Ken rests a comforting hand on Paul's drooping shoulder, while Vin pats his grief-stricken pal on the back.

KEN
We love you too, brother.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

SUPER: 2 WEEKS LATER

Fred drains a bottle of wine on his stoop when a primer black Camaro Z28 barrels into the lot with T-tops open and tunes blaring. Vin screeches to a halt and sets the parking brake before climbing out. Paul and Chowder wander over from their smoke spot as Vin admires his racy new chariot.

CHOWDER
New ride?

VIN
Bought it off my foreman Tony.

PAUL
Of course you got an IROC.
What is it with you Guidos?

CHOWDER
So what? I like it. Is it fast?

VIN
Tony's said it runs like a raped ape but might not pass emissions. Feels sluggish, like something's wrong with the carburetor.

PAUL
Smells like it's running rich.
Pop the hood of this monkey-fucker.

As he looks over the car's well-worn interior, Paul notices an unstrung electric guitar lying on the back seat.

PAUL (CONT'D)

That the one that got sat on?

VIN

Yup. Whole headstock is cracked and I think the truss rod is bent.

With the hood raised, Paul leans in and adjusts a small screw, smoothing out the engine's rough, loping idle. Paul lowers the hood as Vin shuts off the engine.

PAUL (CONT'D)

That should do it. Sounds to me like it needs a new neck. Come by tomorrow at noon. We'll go down the basement and see what we can find.

VIN

I'll be there. But, why didn't you tell me your Dad worked on guitars?

PAUL

Because my father wasn't some bullshit repair guy, he was a classically trained Master luthier. BIG fucking difference.

VIN

No doubt. Honestly, I'm excited just to see his workshop.

CHOWDER

Wait'll you meet Ma, she's a trip.

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - AFTERNOON

A worn stool sits empty at the workbench. Fluorescent lamps fill the musty cellar with cold, sterile light. Stringed instruments of every type rest on stands, hang from hooks in the walls and ceiling, and lie stacked in cases on shelves. The floor is a maze of power tools and woodworking projects. Vin and Paul search a rack full of electric guitar necks.

PAUL

Maple or Rosewood?

VIN

Either is fine, as long as it's got 22 frets. Thanks again for helping me out. You come down here a lot?

Paul wears a far away look and his voice is melancholy.

PAUL

Not too much anymore. Mom can't
either, since she got sick.

(heavy sigh)

I used to sit for hours watching
him work. He was gonna teach me.

VIN

I feel like a kid in a candy store.
I wanna move in down here.

PAUL

I can see that. You and my Dad
would have gotten along great.

VIN

You think so?

PAUL

Sure. Other than that long fucking
hair, he really would've liked you.

Vin pauses his search and looks over with a smile.

VIN

Oh yeah? Why?

PAUL

Because unlike most people, you're
a real musician. You can actually
write and play your own songs.

VIN

Music's all I've ever wanted to do.

PAUL

But ya gotta get rid of that name.

VIN

What? What's wrong with our name?

PAUL

Not the band name, stupid. Your
lame ass stage name. Vinny Cole?

VIN

I thought it sounded cooler. More
rock and roll, y'know?

PAUL

It's dumb. How do you want to be
remembered? Be proud of your name.

VIN
I am. It's just until we get
signed. You might be right, though.

Vin selects one of the guitar necks and looks it over.

VIN (CONT'D)
I think I found the right one.

PAUL
Who, Sami? She's a fine piece of
ass. Lemme know when you guys break
up so I can get her number.

Vin cocks his head and responds with a wounded look.

VIN
Yo, that's not cool.

PAUL
Oh c'mon, I'm just fucking with ya.

The upstairs door cracks open and Mama MOLLY's melodic voice
calls down in a thick Irish accent.

MOLLY (O.S.)
Paul? Time for lunch, dear. Come
and fill your bellies, lads.

VIN
Your Mom sounds like Julia Child.

PAUL
Cooks like her too. Ever had tripe?

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - AFTERNOON

MUSIC: Catchy, melodic hard rock.

Vin and his bandmates stand in an isolation booth, gathered
around a microphone to record some background vocals. In a
unified voice, the musicians sing the anthem's chorus. From
the control booth, producer MK SMITH is pleased.

MK SMITH (V.O.)
Hell yeah, THAT'S the one! Good job
guys, go ahead and take 5--

Happy to nail the take, the enthusiastic band members remove
their headphones and start to exit the soundproofed cubicle.

MK SMITH (CONT'D)
Hey Vin, stay there. I wanna do
another take of the pre-chorus
coming back from the bridge.

Alan, Jeff and the gang pass the array of analog mixing
boards, high fiving on the way out for a smoke break. While
Al holds the door open for his pals, a crying Sami barges
past him, angrily storming into the studio's control room.

SAMI
Where is that asshole?

MK SMITH
Excuse me? Who are you?

Seeing his producer's confusion and discomfort, Vin
practically sprints from the booth to defuse the situation.

VIN
Sami? What's wrong?

Sami waves a Wawa receipt bearing a scrawled name and phone
number while tearfully accusing Vin of infidelity.

SAMI
I found this in your jacket.

MK SMITH
THAT's what this is about?

VIN
Let me explain--

SAMI
Whose number is this? Who is this
Kelly bitch, huh? Some skank?

The Grammy-nominated guitarist looks over in dismay at his
sound engineer who nearly doubles over with laughter.

SAMI (CONT'D)
Oh, you think this is funny?

Vin cringes in embarrassment at her misplaced jealousy.

VIN
I'm really sorry about this, dude.
Babe, the K in MK stands for Kelly.

MK SMITH
No problem. Let's break for lunch.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE BAR AND GRILL

Vin is sitting at the bar drinking beer with Paul.

VIN (V.O.)

The Admiral was the perfect place for us to have a few beers after our day jobs, because employees hardly ever paid for drinks.

VIN

Can't believe she pulled that shit.

PAUL

Believe it. Latin chicks are nuts.

VIN

I'm just sick of the jealousy. It's like she doesn't trust me, y'know?

PAUL

Maybe you guys should break up. This job isn't exactly--

Paul pauses and frowns as he recognizes a customer.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Goddamn it.

VIN

What?

Across the club, a gruff middle-aged man tosses back a shot of whiskey before stuffing a dollar into a dancer's bikini.

PAUL

Jimmy fucking Dugan.

VIN (V.O.)

Jimmy Dugan was an Irish pipefitter who would get drunk and harass the girls. Problem was, he was an ex-boxer who would pick a fight with anyone who looked at him funny.

VIN

Who? Barney Rubble over there?

PAUL

That's him. Almost broke my fucking hand last time I threw his ass out.

VIN

Want me to take care of it?

VIN (V.O.)

Now here's the thing, I could hold my own by this point, but I wasn't some bad ass bouncer. I was just a kid chasing a record deal. Sometimes I had to fake being crazy, which put me in some pretty dangerous situations.

PAUL

(laughs)

Sure thing. Be my guest.

VIN (V.O.)

I also made some really bad choices. This was one of them.

Vin approaches the unruly customer, who continues to paw at the skittish dancers as they try to collect their tips.

VIN (V.O.)

It always felt like my pride was on the line. Like, if you got punked or lost a fight, you lost your job.

Sporting a mischievous grin, Paul joins Steve at the bar to watch as Vin taps Jimmy on the shoulder. The feisty drunk stands and tries to take a swipe at Vin, who dodges the blow easily while staying an inch or 2 out of kicking distance.

Feinting to the left, Vin sends a straight right smashing into Dugan's forehead to no effect. Wincing in pain and disbelief, Vin shakes his hand as the sturdy ex-pugilist squares up to face him, bobbing and weaving as he advances.

Backing away, Vin throws a series of stiff jabs followed by a sneaky uppercut that finally drops Mr. Dugan, who instantly pops back to his feet, seemingly eager for more.

VIN (V.O.)

His fucking bones were made of concrete. Every time I knocked him down, he got back up.

PAUL

What's the matter, tough guy?
Can't take an old man?

VIN (V.O.)

Paul was laughing, but I was getting tired fast and knew that if I ran out of gas, this old man might actually kill me.

(MORE)

VIN (CONT'D)
*I was keeping my cool but inside I
 was beginning to panic a little.*

VIN
 You gonna fuckin' help me or not?

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Paul and Vin use their combined weight to forcibly shove Jimmy Dugan out the red door. He drunkenly attempts to re-enter, only to be turned away by the determined bouncers.

PAUL
 Cut it out Jimmy. Go the fuck home.

Jimmy gives up and staggers out to the street, where Fred sits watching with a bottle of wine and an amused smile.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 See ya next month, ya asshole.

VIN
 (out of breath)
 That is one tough motherfucker.

PAUL
 Fucking hilarious. Wait'll I tell Chowder, he's gonna shit.

VIN
 I think I might need some ice for my hands.

PAUL
 Nice moves out there, Balboa.
 Let's get a beer.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Vin holds open the door of a taxi. Tipsy after a good night, Gail tosses her bag inside and pulls him close. With a naughty grin, she turns Vin's head, licks his cheek and grabs his ass.

Laughing, she slinks into the cab's seat and glances back to Vin, beckoning him with a single come-hither finger. Vin pulls a ten-spot from his pocket, hands it to the driver, closes the door and wags his own finger playfully.

VIN
 Goodnight, Gail.

GAIL

Sweet dreams, baby boy.

She blows him a kiss and the yellow sedan pulls away. Vin turns to wave at Fred, but finds him missing from the stoop.

Braking hard, the silver Cadillac hauls itself into the parking lot in a cloud of dust. The passenger door swings open and CYNDI is shoved out. Stumbling backwards, her heel catches and she falls, skinning a knee on the rough gravel. The blunt-smoking pimp leans over and throws a handful of dollar bills out at the young woman, who defiantly flips him off while scrambling to gather up the discarded singles.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

Vin runs to the foyer in a flash, reaches behind the cigarette machine and marches back to the parking lot holding a familiar-looking piece of hickory with 'RELAX' written on it.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Vin is a man on a mission. He helps Cyndi to her feet and stalks around the car to gently rap his wooden peacemaker twice on CADILLAC's tinted window, glaring at the driver.

VIN

Yo Motherfucker.

The window comes down 6 inches and the funk music stops.

CADILLAC

Don't fuck with me and my livestock, Youngblood.

VIN

(menacing)

Then get your business the fuck out of my parking lot.

VIN (V.O.)

Like I said, sometimes I had to put on an act, and sometimes I made some really bad choices. But this was one time where I was glad I stood my ground. It earned me a little respect in the streets, but more importantly--

The car window silently glides up in a wisp of reefer smoke as the Caddy rumbles by and merges into the flow of traffic.

VIN (V.O.)

*I had made it known that the skinny
longhaired white boy was one crazy
motherfucker. Mission accomplished.*

Clearly wasted, Cyndi looks bad from life on the streets.

CYNDI

Hey, tell Brenda I wanna come back.

VIN (V.O.)

*There weren't a ton of working
girls out there. Maybe 2 or 3 a
night, and Cyndi was the only ex-
dancer I saw turning tricks.
Sometimes, if it was a slow night,
the ladies would ask me:*

CYNDI

Want a freebie, beautiful?

VIN (V.O.)

*Next to the Admiral and just down
the block was a fleabag motel
called the Oasis. An absolute dive,
a flophouse really. Working girls
liked it because they could rent
rooms by the quarter hour.*

VIN

(kind smile)

Nah, I'm good. Thanks though.

VIN (V.O.)

*Attached to the main building was,
you guessed it, another strip club.
Guys would drink at the Oasis bar,
pick up a girl, score some dope and
go right next door to the motel.
One stop shopping at its finest.*

Vin hands the dopesick Cyndi a pair of crumpled twenties, prompting the novice junkie to squeal with delight. Gleeful, she bounds off to the Oasis.

VIN (V.O.)

*It wasn't about the money. Of
course I knew what she'd do with
it, but now, for at least a few
hours, she'd get a break and maybe
stay a little safer for one night.*

EXT. ADMIRAL WILSON BOULEVARD - CONTINUOUS

Cheers of celebration spill out from next door, where the French Quarter is emptying after a late-night win by the home team. Cigars are lit, and soon one of the men notices skinny, longhaired Vin standing by the curb. A crude joke prompts laughter from the group, which includes Vic and Tony from Saber Vending.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

Paul and Sami exit the red door. Vin joins them as Paul pulls his car keys and lights a smoke.

VIN
Some familiar faces next door.

PAUL
Turds of a feather, I guess.

VIN
Which one is Brenda's ex-husband?

PAUL
You mean Mike Cordova, the Baron of the Boulevard? He's the short fuck with the Jimmy Swaggart hairdo.

VIN
Him? He owns the Admiral?

PAUL
Not after the divorce. Legally, everything was in her name already.

SAMI
I hope she took his ass to the cleaners. You should've heard the shit he used to do to her.

PAUL
Guy with the moustache and glasses is Glenn, Mike's bar manager. Total weasel. The big dude is Jimmy Pike.

VIN
Chowder warned me about him. Didn't he use to be a wrestler or boxer?

PAUL
Yeah, and now he's a loose cannon from all the fucking steroids.

The group turns and heads for the parking lot.

SAMI

So, Brenda's ex-husband opened another club right next door to the Admiral just out of spite?

PAUL

Not exactly. He's trying to bankrupt her with bullshit fines so he can buy it back cheap. Calls code enforcement on us, fucks with the property line, shit like that.

VIN

Wow. Talk about an ugly divorce.

SAMI

He's just a sore loser who's mad that he got beat by a girl. Can't stand to see her win. Makes me sick. He doesn't love her but can't let her go. Pathetic, really.

PAUL

That's why I'm never getting married. Not worth it.

VIN

Especially if you end up hating each other.

Paul arrives at his car, Vin and Sami at his.

PAUL

Wait, aren't you both Catholic? Isn't divorce a big no-no?

SAMI

Oh, I'll make him sign a prenup.

VIN

There it is. Honeymoon's over.

PAUL

Honestly, I'm surprised she stayed with your goofy ass this long.

The friends climb in and start their engines.

VIN

Meet us at the diner?

PAUL

Hell no. I'm gonna go get laid.

Paul grins and lays rubber as he speeds off into the night. Vin turns to Sami with a warm smile and they kiss.

VIN
Pancakes?

SAMI
Pancakes!

Vin shifts the Camaro into gear while Sami reconsiders.

SAMI (CONT'D)
Maybe French toast.

Fred's 10-speed slows to a stop at the liquor store stoop. He dismounts and greets Vin with a broad, gap-toothed smile.

FREDDY
Lookin good, Youngblood.

VIN
Feelin good, Fred. Take it easy.

FREDDY
I take it any way I can get it.

VIN
I know that's right.

Fred cackles with laughter as Vin waves and drives off.

INT. OASIS HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

CYNDI
When did ya get back? Haven't seen
ya round here in like 2 months.

The air conditioning rattles and drips on the carpet. Cyndi sits on the edge of the bed flicking a needle to remove the bubbles. She readies the dose and injects between her toes.

CYNDI (CONT'D)
Oh my God. I missed you so much,
baby. This shit is so fucking good.

Jumbo stands by the window holding a semiautomatic pistol, peering through the curtain to watch Vin's car ride past. He lumbers over to the drugged girl, wraps a hand around her throat and lewdly puts the gun barrel in her mouth.

JUMBO
Yeah? Good, huh? You like dat shit?
Then keep your fucking mouth shut.

Jumbo pulls a packet of heroin from his stash and dangles it in Cyndi's face, her hungry eyes laser focused on the drugs.

JUMBO (CONT'D)

I wasn't here. You didn't see me.

CYNDI

Sure, baby.

She reaches for the dope but he snatches it away and puts the gun to her forehead, pulling back the slide to load it.

JUMBO

You gonna hafta do better then dat.

CYNDI

I swear to God you wasn't here.

JUMBO

Good girl. Here ya go.

He tosses the bag on the bed. Cyndi is quick to retrieve it.

JUMBO (CONT'D)

Now take off your fucking clothes, bitch. I ain't got all night.

She tucks the smack in her purse and complies, mechanically undressing in a numb, mindless pantomime of human sexuality.

EXT. WAREHOUSE REHEARSAL SPACE - SUNDOWN

Sweaty and excited, Jeff, Alan and Vin emerge from practice. The other bandmembers stow their gear and bid them farewell.

ALAN

Battle of the bands? I'm in.

JEFF

Down the shore, too.

VIN

In Wildwood? When?

ALAN

Labor Day weekend, baby!

JEFF

Hotel room and everything, but we gotta share it with another band.

ALAN

Whoa, what happened to your car?

A vanilla milkshake is splattered across the hood and the word 'ASSHOLE' is written in lipstick on the windshield.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Uh, Houston, we have a problem.

JEFF

Did you forget her birthday?

VIN

No. I mean, I don't think so.

JEFF

Anniversary?

VIN

Maybe. Shit, I don't know.

ALAN

It's your anniversary already?

JEFF

It's only been, like, 2 months.

VIN

3. Not for much longer, though.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Chris and Vin take turns doing bong rips in the living room. The apartment is surprisingly neat, tidy and organized.

CHRIS

Call her right now and apologize.

(tokens)

If you don't, I fucking will.

VIN

What do you mean? We just broke up.

CHRIS

(exhales)

Who's gonna clean this place now?

VIN

I say let nature take its course.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

SUPER: 2 WEEKS LATER

The front door is ajar, held open by an overturned vodka bottle.

The coffee table and floor are a sea of beer cans, potato chip bags, and fast food containers. One half-eaten slice of pizza remains in a box on the floor.

A clock radio's alarm beeps from inside one of the bedrooms. Both doors open simultaneously. The men are very hungover as they pull on their work boots. Vin microwaves some leftover coffee while Chris decides to wake and bake. He exhales, coughs and grabs breakfast to go from the pizza box, gnawing on day-old crust as he follows Vin out the door.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - EVENING

Vin pulls up in front of a working-class house and honks the horn. DAN emerges with his guitar case and climbs in.

DAN

What's up, man? Thanks for the ride to rehearsal. Ready to kill it?

VIN

Always, brother. Hey, do you have your part of the rent for the practice room this month? You know how the landlord gets when he doesn't get his money on time.

The virtuoso musician fidgets uncomfortably in his seat.

DAN

About that. I'm a little short. Think you can cover me this month?

VIN

Again? Seriously? Dude, you really have to get a better job.

DAN

Do you think I'm a good guitarist?

VIN

What? You're the Eddie Van Halen of Philadelphia. What the hell does that have to do with our rent?

DAN

Here's the thing: If I lock myself into a day job or some career, it says that I have a backup plan and I don't want a backup plan. Guitar is the only thing I'm great at and the only thing I want to do.

VIN

That's some twisted logic, but I get it. Look, we need a decent place to practice and all of the big bands rehearse there. Dude, we're rehearsing next to Heaven's Edge and Blackeyed Susan. We get to be part of the larger scene by being around these bands. It's not just about practice, it's about status and visibility too.

DAN

Well, I think it's too expensive. We should move back into Frank's basement and rehearse for free.

VIN

Apparently it's not that expensive because I keep paying for you.

DAN

I really appreciate it, man. I swear I'll pay you back with interest when we get signed.

VIN

And I'd appreciate it if you'd stop stealing the condiments out of my refrigerator when we hang out, OK? Every time we have a PlayStation marathon, somehow my mustard, lighters and butter all go missing. What the fuck, dude?

DAN

(offended)

What? I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about.

(smirks)

But for the record, my Mom really likes that whipped butter you buy.

VIN

Dick.

Vin shakes his head and they pull away.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Vin stands with Chowder and Steve. Rizzo dozes on the sofa. Tastefully dressed in conservative business attire, Brenda gathers legal papers and receipts into a manila envelope as she wraps up the meeting. She looks great but is not happy.

STEVE
What is it this time?

BRENDA
Code Enforcement. Again.

STEVE
Did you contact the Zoning Board?

BRENDA
The bastards never return my calls.

STEVE
Not surprised. Glenn's cousin is
County Commissioner.

BRENDA
This shit has to stop. These
lawyers are bleeding me dry.

CHOWDER
Who's this new guy Rizzo hired?

BRENDA
I haven't hired anyone yet. Steven?

STEVE
His name's Dimitri. He's from New
York and goes to college in Philly.
That's all I know.

VIN
Is he gonna be permanent or is it
just until Paul comes back?

STEVE
We'll have to wait and see.

BRENDA
You boys went over? How is she?

VIN
Still waiting on the biopsy
results. Paul's been there for 3
days straight.

CHOWDER
Hitting on the nurses non-stop.

BRENDA
What about the flowers?

CHOWDER
Next to the bed. They smell great.

VIN
That was you?

Brenda dons a scarf and shades before walking to the door.

BRENDA
A boy's best friend is his mother,
and don't you forget it, boychik.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - EVENING

Sami wipes down the bar while Kathy stocks the beer coolers.

KATHY
Think you'll get back together?

SAMI
I don't know. We used to stay up
all night watching movies, but now
he's so tired after work he falls
asleep in like 5 minutes.

KATHY
Trust me, I know. My man only comes
to see his kids every other Sunday.

SAMI
I don't even get that. Every
weekend its band practice, gigs,
recording studios. Always focused
on his music, never on us.

KATHY
Don't you worry about it, baby
girl. Plenty of fish in the sea.

SAMI
Not really what I wanted to hear.

Vin and Chowder enter the bar with DIMITRI, attractive and fit with a goatee and shaved head. The men talk to Dimitri while Sami looks him over. He notices her and grins.

DIMITRI
Excusez-moi, parlez-vous français?

SAMI
Oui.

DIMITRI
Fantastique! Je m'appelle Dimitri.

SAMI
Nice to meet you. I'm Sami.

DIMITRI
Wanna grab lunch sometime? I know a
great sushi place on South Street.

SAMI
You know what? I'd like that.

INT. ADMIRAL MAIN STAGE - LATER

Blonde VICKY removes a 10 dollar bill from between her augmented breasts as she concludes her set. Leaving the blinding lights of the main stage, she opens the dressing room door before pausing to stop Vin as he passes by.

VICKY
You're Vin, right? Paul's friend?

VIN
Uh huh. He's not working tonight.

VICKY
I know, he called me from the
hospital. I'm Vicky, by the way.

VIN
So I finally meet the famous Vicky.

VICKY
I have something for him.
Hang on, gimme just a sec.

Vicky enters the dressing room and returns with her purse.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Give him this and tell him I hope
his Mom feels better.

She takes Vin's hand and slips him a baggie of white powder.

VIN
I'll, uh, see that he gets it.

The beautiful woman flashes a dazzling Baywatch smile.

VICKY
Y'know, Paul never mentioned you
were so cute. Are ya single?

Vin peeks behind the bar to see Sami flirting with Dimitri.

VIN
As a matter of fact I am.

VIN (V.O.)
*I mentioned something earlier about
bad choices. In hindsight, this was
most definitely one of those.*

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE BATHROOM - LATER

Sniffing sounds come from the executive bathroom near the dressing room. Vin and Vicky's bodies are fully intertwined, drunkenly kissing and groping each other with lusty abandon.

VICKY
Are we the only ones left?

Pulling off his polo, she twirls it before tossing it aside.

VIN
I think Rizzo's still out there.

She yanks his belt buckle, pulls him close to cup his groin.

VICKY
Excellent.

Vicky crouches to claim her prize.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

Rizzo stands squinting at a keypad, entering a code to arm the security system. It beeps and he exits the building.

VIN (V.O.)
*There was one small problem. Rizzo
locked us in and left. I didn't
have a key. Or the alarm codes.
Let's just say mistakes were made.*

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The naked duo submits to their primal needs, rocking the heavy sink on its corroded iron base. Groans of impending ecstasy are cut short when the rusty pipe bends and snaps, spraying water everywhere. The white porcelain falls from the wall and shatters in jagged pieces on the tile floor.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Cracking up as they get dressed, Vin and Vicky emerge from the back into the bar area. All of the house lights are off.

VICKY
Where is everybody?

VIN

Uh oh.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Vin gives Vicky the details of his brilliant escape plan.

VIN

These cameras don't record anymore
so we'll just run out the side
door, hop in our cars and get out
of here before the cops show up.
Got it?

VIN (V.O.)

*The police would shut the alarm off
and that would be that.*

VICKY

Got it. Follow me to my place, I'm
not done with you yet.

They share a steamy kiss as dank water seeps from under the
bathroom door, spreading a murky puddle across the carpet.

VIN (V.O.)

I'd just play dumb about the sink.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Fred sleeps curled up on the stoop. The club's side door
bursts open, triggering flashing lights and a shrill alarm.
Vicky sprints from the building with Vin close behind. They
jump into their vehicles and tear out of the parking lot.

Awakened by the siren and resulting chaos, Fred shakes his
head and laughs. The stray cat yawns and resumes his nap.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - LATER

Vin stands naked and peeing in a pink bathroom. He flushes
and returns to the inky darkness of Vicky's bedroom, where
she lies passed out and snoring. Disoriented, he blindly
navigates the unfamiliar surroundings before stubbing a toe.

Cursing under his breath, Vin reaches for his jeans and
pulls them on while grabbing his boots and keys. Just then,
the apartment's thin walls are shaken by someone pounding on
the front door. Startled, Vin dons his shirt and heads
downstairs to investigate as Vicky begins to stir.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

As the thudding blows continue, Vin reaches the door at the bottom of the stairs and looks through the peephole. A pair of police OFFICERS stand backlit by flashes of red and blue.

VIN
Uh, hello?

OFFICER ONE
Collingswood Police Department!
Search Warrant! Open Up!

VIN
Yes sir, no problem. Just, uh, give
us a second to get dressed--

Vin looks to the top of the stairs and sees Vicky's groggy eyes go wide. She rushes into the john to flush her stash.

OFFICER TWO
Open the door! Do it NOW!

Vin calmly unlocks the door and cracks it open a few inches.

VIN
What's going on, officers?

OFFICER ONE
We're looking for Victoria.

Vin motions upstairs as the cops look him up and down.

OFFICER TWO
We have a warrant for her arrest.
Distribution of narcotics.

VIN
Hey, I just met her, fellas.

OFFICER ONE
Uh huh.

OFFICER TWO
Do you know whose car that is?

The cop points over to Vin's Camaro, which is double-parked diagonally with its front tire resting on a lawn sprinkler.

VIN (V.O.)
Like I said: Mistakes were made.

VIN
Um, yeah, mine. Sir.

Vicky emerges from the bathroom to the telltale gurgling swish of vigorous flushing. One cop starts up the stairs to arrest her while the other pokes a finger in Vin's chest.

OFFICER ONE

Get in your car and get the fuck outta here. Now!

VIN

Yes sir.

Vin pauses and looks back to see Vicky lying face down and handcuffed. He shakes his head, gets in the car and starts the motor. With a heavy sigh, he backs out and drives off.

VIN (V.O.)

I never saw Vicky again.

EXT. BOARDWALK PIZZA PARLOR - DAY

Teeming masses of pale, shirtless tourists shuffle past a pizza stand as the Labor Day crowd swarms the Jersey Shore. Paul folds his slice and takes a huge bite while Vin and Ken slurp on Italian Ice. Jeff and Al work the busy boardwalk, selling tickets to the show and recruiting new fans by handing out flyers while the demo tape plays on a boombox.

KEN

Love this stuff. Thanks man.

VIN

It's the least I could do. No way I could have installed it by myself.

KEN

Not a problem. Dad was a plumber.

VIN

You think Brenda's still mad?

PAUL

What for? First time the carpet's been clean since I been there.

KEN

Yeah, and insurance paid for it.

VIN

I know she felt bad about my arm.

PAUL

It's your own damn fault, told ya not to get within arm's reach.

KEN

I didn't want to say anything just yet, but last week an informant saw Jumbo's car over near the Oasis.

VIN

So, he's back in Camden?

KEN

Not sure yet, but it looks like it.

PAUL

Big Dave's gotta get paid.

KEN

Forget all that. Check it out--

Al and Jeff are swamped by young people seeking tickets.

KEN (CONT'D)

You're gonna sell that place out. Should be a pretty big crowd.

PAUL

Really? Big crowd? C'mon, it ain't Madison Square Garden, it's a VFW.

KEN

Gotta start somewhere. Besides, I saw Bon Jovi play, like, 2 blocks from here back in '83.

PAUL

Whatever, I'm just glad to be outta that fucking hospital.

VIN

How's she doing? She good?

PAUL

Yeah. She wanted to come. Nurses almost had to call the orderly.

A hearty clap on Vin's back announces Chowder's arrival. He's accompanied by Dimitri and half a dozen dancers.

CHOWDER

Sorry I'm late.

VIN

We don't go on until midnight.

CHOWDER

Good. Gives us 10 hours to party.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

The room is trashed, littered with bottles, cans and undergarments. A jumble of limbs poke out from under the sheets and motionless bodies lie strewn across the floor.

The bathroom door opens, releasing a cloud of smoke into the room. 5 black men walk out wearing matching blue tuxedos. Al emerges last, toking on a roach. The doo-wop group waves to him and heads out, passing Ken and Paul coming in sipping cups of hot coffee as the hungover revelers start to wake.

PAUL

Jesus, what a pigsty.

KEN

Hey, to the victor go the spoils.

ALAN

That's right. We came. We saw.
We kicked their asses!

KEN

Congratulations, but you guys
should probably beat it. I think
housekeeping called the cops.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - NIGHT

Rizzo sips a drink while playfully busting Vin's balls.

RIZZO

So, what's this I hear about Jimmy
Pike whooping your ass?

VIN

Seriously? First Paulie, now you?

VIN (V.O.)

*Jimmy Pike had sent word through
some of the girls that he decided
he didn't like the look of me and
was going to fuck me up. Jimmy was
Mike Cordova's mad dog, an insane
giant of a man who liked to hurt
people just because he could.*

RIZZO

Hey it's OK, I understand.
You're a lover, not a fighter.

VIN

That's it.

Fuming, Vin turns and storms out of the club. Rizzo scrambles to catch up, desperately trying to stop him.

RIZZO

Vin, no. I was kidding. Wait--

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Vin strides purposefully over to the French Quarter. Rizzo tries to cut him off but Vin walks around, determined to confront his antagonist and end the smack talk. Rizzo grabs Vin's legs and is dragged along for several paces across the hardscrabble.

RIZZO

Please, don't do this--

VIN (V.O.)

Most of the time I was faking the psycho thing, but this time it felt like my manhood was at stake. I honestly don't know what I was thinking. Jimmy Pike would have literally killed me. No question.

Vin stops and looks down at Rizzo's terrified expression.

VIN

Ok Rizzo, get the fuck off me.

RIZZO

C'mon pal, let's go do some shots.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE - LATER

Rizzo and Vin share a toast as JIMMY PIKE enters the bar.

JIMMY PIKE

Word has it that you were coming down to find me cause you heard I said I wanted to kill you.

The club holds its collective breath. Rizzo freezes, Steve edges closer to the phone and Paul anxiously stubs out his cig. Vin drains the shot, stands, and looks Jim in the eye.

VIN

Yeah, that's right. I don't have any problem with you Jim, but I'm standing right here.

After a long moment, the big man gives a chuckle and nods.

JIMMY PIKE

You got balls, dude. You're OK in my book. You need an extra set of hands one night, I got your back.

Jim ducks his head going through the doorway as he leaves and heads back to the French Quarter.

VIN (V.O.)

Jimmy eventually put his old buddy Glenn in the hospital for hitting on his girlfriend. He actually liked the guy, but he shattered his leg in 3 places and carved his initials in Glenn's forehead with a broken beer bottle. Jimmy never fucked with me again after that.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - DAY

A plump Canadian goose waddles through a gap in the chain link fence at the rear of the parking lot. Following a trail of discarded French fries, it eagerly gobbles up the scraps.

A few yards away, Paul stands pissing. He drains his brew, burps loudly and zips up. The goose spies him and becomes aggressive, flapping its wings and hissing. Paul defensively flicks his cigarette at the angry bird and chases it away.

PAUL

Go back to Canada, ya fucking mutt.

Parking nearby, Vin strips off his yellow construction vest and walks over. He looks down the embankment at the homeless living in tents along the grassy riverside. Fred is among them, sharing a drink and dancing with a lady friend.

VIN

I see Fred's got a new girlfriend.

PAUL

(points)

Oh yeah? Well, so do you--

At the front of the bar, an odd, swarthy man with beady eyes unloads cases of booze from a delivery truck. His frumpy wife holds the door open and he rolls the dolly through.

From inside the doorway, an awkward preteen girl silently stares at Vin with a shy, crooked smile. He returns the grin and she giggles excitedly before dashing away.

VIN

Who are they again?

PAUL

Him and his wife used to run the liquor store, now they just come in a couple days a week to clean up and stock the bar.

VIN

They're kinda scary-looking.

PAUL

Fucking Pineys. Probably 6 teeth between the both of them.

VIN

Like mutants out of The Hills Have Eyes or something.

PAUL

Hey now Jethro, that's no way to talk about your future in-laws.

The pair enter the red door to do some serious day drinking.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - LATER

The guys sit talking to Rizzo and drinking with the dancers.

BILLY wheels in stacked cases of liquor and begins sorting and restocking the bottles, giving the off-duty bouncers a disapproving look as they sloppily pour a round of shots.

PAUL

Hey Bill, what's goin on?

BILLY

Why are you still here? Don't you guys have homes of your own?

Paul pauses while lighting his smoke and motions to the cadre of beautiful young women surrounding him.

PAUL

Whatchu talkin bout? I AM home.

Annoyed, Paul shrugs it off while he and Vin share a laugh.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Too damn quiet at my house anyway.

VIN

No free drinks, either.

PAUL

Fucking A-right. Good point.

Savoring his role as ringmaster, Rizzo doles out tips and drinks as the lovely ladies rub his shoulders.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Not to mention the other perks.

VIN
There's no place like home.

PAUL
I'll drink to that.

They clink shot glasses to complete the toast.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - LATER

Vin and Paul exit the red door laughing and quite drunk.

VIN
Nah man, I think she likes you better. She's more your type.

PAUL
I fucking hate Pineys. Their family tree is a fucking telephone pole.

VIN
Just think, your wedding song can be the theme from Deliverance.

PAUL
(imitates banjo)
Squeal like a pig! Wheeee!

Still foraging around the rear of the parking lot, the territorial goose honks angrily. Paul looks over at the noisy waterfowl and back to Vin. With a smirk, he reaches into the bed of his work truck and produces a burlap sack.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Ya think old Billy-boy will mind cleaning up a little goose shit?

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Cackling maniacally, Paul and Vin burst through the exit, run to their vehicles and haul ass out of the parking lot. After a long moment, a curious Fred rises from the stoop and walks over to investigate the sound of rising panic just behind the red door. He cautiously reaches for the handle.

The door swings open and a succession of half-naked women run screaming from the building, followed by Brenda, Rizzo, the bartenders, deejay, and several dozen unhappy customers.

The fire exit opens and Steve, Chowder and Dimitri finally manage to shoo the disagreeable bird outside. Bill emerges last, arms smeared with poop and feathers stuck to his face.

VIN (V.O.)

Of course, Brenda wasn't exactly thrilled with us afterwards, but Rizzo secretly laughed about it.

RIZZO

(laughs)

Those guys are fucking nuts.

EXT. OASIS HOTEL - NIGHT

Pedaling across the Oasis Hotel parking lot, Fred stops his bike to pick up a half-smoked cigarette butt. Just as he strikes a match, a door bursts open on the second floor.

Jumbo drags the unconscious Cyndi out by her hair. He rifles through her purse before shoving her down the stairs. Her battered body tumbles down the steps, leaving Cyndi a limp, bloody heap lying motionless on the concrete. Fred locks narrowed eyes with Jumbo, who glares back.

JUMBO

Fuck you lookin at, nigga?

Jumbo leans over the railing and flashes the pistol. The spent match burns Fred's fingers. He drops it, pausing with a sad look before he shakes his head and rides off.

JUMBO (CONT'D)

Yeah, you best keep ridin, old man.

A door cracks open several units down. Wearing only boxers, Saber Vending's Tony Lombardo peers out, his bloodshot eyes wild with drug-induced paranoia.

Begging and pleading in Russian, a young woman desperately tries to push her way past him. He grabs her arm, roughly shoves her back inside the room and slams the door.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Vin says goodnight to Steve as he walks to his Camaro at the end of another shift. A scrap of paper is tucked under his wiper blade with 'room 215' scrawled on it. After a moment, Vin realizes its meaning and hurries back to the red door.

STEVE

What is it?

VIN
I gotta call Ken--

Fred relaxes on the stoop with a satisfied look on his face.

EXT. OASIS HOTEL - SAME TIME

From his idling car, Jumbo watches Vin go back inside and sees Fred's reaction. He quickly puts 2 and 2 together.

JUMBO
That mothafucker--

Furious, he pulls out of the Oasis parking lot and jumps the curb in front of the Admiral. Fred cowers, diving away as the car plows into the stoop and comes to a stop. Jumbo grabs something from the glove box and hauls his bulk from the car. Fred gathers himself and defiantly squares up.

FREDDY
I ain't scared a you. I boxed in
the Navy. Come n get it, bitch.

Squeezing the can with both hands, Jumbo squirts a stream of lighter fluid that drenches Fred's lower body. Before Fred can react, Jumbo lights a match and drops it. Fred cries out as he is suddenly enveloped, blue flame licking at his bare legs, blistering the exposed skin everywhere it touches.

Responding to his piercing screams, Vin and Steve emerge from the club and run over to assist Fred. Thinking quickly, Vin grabs an old moving blanket hung on a nearby guardrail and wraps it around Fred's legs to extinguish the fire. Fred moans softly as Vin and Steve try to comfort him.

Pleased with himself, Jumbo returns to his car. Backing up, he swerves to intentionally run over Fred's bike before pulling away with a hearty laugh and driving off.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE BATHROOM - EVENING

DIMITRI
That's insane. How bad was it?

VIN
First and second degree, mostly.
Lotta blisters, maybe some scars.

DIMITRI
Did the cops find him yet?

VIN
(shakes head)
Ken thinks he ran back to Philly.

DIMITRI
Speaking of which, I'm taking a couple of the girls over to a club on Front Street after work. You in?

VIN
Sure. I mean, it depends. You didn't invite Sami, did you?

DIMITRI
(laughs)
Oh shit! Sorry, I had no idea you were still together. My bad.

VIN
We're not. She's fair game if you--

DIMITRI
Doesn't matter. Ex-girlfriends are off-limits. Every guy knows that.

VIN
I wish someone would tell Paulie.

DIMITRI
When's he coming back?

VIN
His Ma has one more round of chemo.

DIMITRI
Paul doesn't like me much, does he?

VIN
He hates New Yorkers. Don't take it personally, he hates Boston too.

DIMITRI
I thought Philadelphia was supposed to be the City of Brotherly Love?

VIN
(laughs)
You're obviously new around here.

DIMITRI
I mean, the city motto is: Caritas fraternitatis maneat in vobis. It literally means 'Let brotherly love abide with you'. Cool, right?

VIN
Camden's motto is: 'We don't like you either so get the fuck out'.

DIMITRI
Sounds about right.

VIN
(shrugs)
Don't worry, it's a Jersey thing.
You get used to it, like the smell.

DIMITRI
Now, the after hours club doesn't
open til 4, but we can pregame at
my place. I'll give you the
address.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Standing outside the high-rise, Vin checks the registry
before pushing a button on the intercom. Dimitri responds
after a few seconds and buzzes him in.

INT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Dimitri answers the door wearing only a bath towel. He
welcomes Vin into his well-appointed luxury apartment.

DIMITRI
Sorry, just getting cleaned up.
Come on in, make yourself at home.

VIN
Nice digs. Mind if I grab a beer?

DIMITRI
Hell no. Get me one, too. There's a
bag in my pocket, cut us out a few
cables before the girls get here.

Dimitri disappears into his bedroom to get ready while Vin
sorts through the contents of his host's black leather coat.

VIN (V.O.)
*Now, he never told me which pocket
the blow was in.*

VIN
Where?

He finds 2 baggies of white powder, one in each pocket.

VIN (CONT'D)
Oh. Nevermind, I found it.

VIN (V.O.)
And more importantly, I didn't think to ask. That was definitely a big mistake.

Vin returns one bag and opens the other. He dumps out a pile and forms 2 lines on a copy of *The Fall* by Albert Camus.

VIN (CONT'D)
 You're into French existentialism?

Vin puts a rolled 20 to his nose and snorts the powder. He drops the bill, furrowing his brow at the taste and burn.

VIN (V.O.)
I made my share of bad choices and questionable decisions back then, but this ranks right up there as one of the worst ideas ever.

VIN (CONT'D)
 Hey man, where'd you get this shit?

DIMITRI
 My buddy Lance. Oh hey, wait! Fuck.

VIN (V.O.)
It was Choco. German heroin.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

SUPER: 3 DAYS LATER

Paul stands in front of Vin's apartment banging on the door.

PAUL
 Hey! Answer the door, jerkoff. I know you're home, your car's here.

VIN (V.O.)
I remember the girls talking to me a little saying 'What's wrong with you, Vin?', but I was out of it. I kept thinking 'I just have to get home'. Somehow, I drove down 76 and basically crawled up my steps. I was ashamed and sick for days. Didn't tell anyone for a while and kept calling out of work until I felt well enough to go back.

Vin opens the door looking like death warmed over.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Brenda wanted me to come by and
check on you. Jesus, what happened?
You look like shit.

VIN

(weakly)

Think I got the flu.

PAUL

Stay the hell away from me then,
Mom just got out of the hospital.

VIN

That's great news.

PAUL

(smiles)

Your punk ass needs to get better
so we can go celebrate.

VIN

I'm fine. Tell Brenda I'll be back
in a few days. Give Ma a great big
kiss for me.

Vin musters a pained smile and Paul leaves.

VIN (V.O.)

A week later I told him the truth.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE OFFICE - EVENING

Vin sits on the sofa explaining himself to Rizzo and Paul.

VIN

Never did it before. I puked.
Barely remember driving home.
Been seriously sick for days.

PAUL

I'm gonna hurt that motherfucker.

VIN (V.O.)

*They blamed Dimitri. Paul wanted to
kill him, but I talked him out of
it. I knew it was my own fault.*

RIZZO

Was it his dope? Does he use?

VIN

Well, he had 2 bags. One in each pocket. One was blow and one was H. I grabbed the wrong bag.

RIZZO

Found out the hard way, did ya?

PAUL

Knew he was a junkie from day 1.

VIN (V.O.)

The guys were so protective of me. Rizzo became this father figure while Paul acted like the guy had poisoned his little brother.

VIN

I promise I'll never go near that shit again, tell you that much.

RIZZO

Good to hear. You're a lucky dude. You could've OD'd right there.

VIN (V.O.)

Rizzo fired Dimitri that day. Made up some excuse and cut him loose without me ever even knowing.

PAUL

(quietly to Rizzo)

You need to quit that shit, too--

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

In his dirty work clothes, an exhausted Vin lays on the sofa watching music videos. Chris enters the room sporting a new haircut, flannel shirt and a mildly infected nose ring.

VIN

Dude, you're an idiot.

CHRIS

How's it look?

VIN

You look like every other grunge dude now.

Chris ties the flannel around his waist and Vin takes note of the band's concert shirt he is wearing underneath.

VIN (CONT'D)
 (smirks)
 Is that who you're going to see?

Nodding, Chris hits the bong before heading to the door. The phone rings and Vin answers.

VIN (CONT'D)
 Hello?

KEN (O.S.)
 Turn on the radio.

VIN
 Oh hey man, what's up?

KEN (O.S.)
 You guys are on MMR right now!

VIN (V.O.)
*WMMR was the biggest rock station
 in Philly. It was a very big deal.*

Vin bursts from the sofa and over to his boombox just in time to hear the ending chorus of the band's debut single.

VIN
 (stunned and smiling)
 Whoa.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Vin and Ken observe the comings and goings at the Oasis.

KEN
 They oughta tear that place down.
 Just bulldoze the whole damn thing.

VIN
 Steve said the Mob keeps immigrant
 girls locked up over there.

KEN
 I wouldn't doubt it. Reminds me,
 you know an ex-dancer named Cyndi?

VIN
 Yeah, saw her a couple weeks ago.

KEN
 Bridge patrol found her body today.

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - THE NEXT DAY

Al orders a drink and catches Vin up on breaking band news.

VIN
 Seriously? Asbury Park?

ALAN
 Showcase gig. We nail this one,
 we're as good as signed.

VIN
 Can you believe we're on the radio?

ALAN
 I know, my folks are freaking out.

VIN
 Time for us to go big or go home.

Al motions to the giant mirror ball rotating over the stage.

ALAN
 How much d'ya think that weighs?

INT. ADMIRAL MAIN STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Vin is perched on a barstool, gripping the support chain.

ALAN
 It's gonna look killer over my kit.

VIN
 All right. You ready?

ALAN
 Go ahead, I'll catch it.

VIN (V.O.)
*It was A LOT heavier than it
 looked.*

Vin lifts the disco ball from its hook. It promptly falls to the stage with a thud, nearly yanking Vin off the stool. It rolls to the edge of the stage, causing Al to dive away like Indiana Jones. Vin scrambles and jams a desperate hand under the shiny globe, stopping its roll and crushing his fingers.

ALAN
 Well, that didn't work.

VIN
 Get this thing off my hand--

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Vin arrives for another shift, raising a bruised digit to give the heavily bandaged Fred a thumb's up before parking. Paul smokes by the red door, shaking his head in amusement.

VIN
I know, I'm an idiot.

PAUL
Me and Chowder put it back.

VIN
You coming this weekend?

PAUL
Bringing a special guest, too.

EXT. OASIS HOTEL - LATER

Paul and Vin meticulously identify each vehicle parked in the Oasis lot, reading license plates as they go. Vin holds his axe handle, Paul has a crowbar and a scribbled note.

VIN
Sure you wanna do this?

VIN (V.O.)
A Ukrainian dancer told Paul that she was being held captive at the Oasis with 7 other girls.

PAUL
Sadie begged me. They burned her and her sister with fucking cigars.

VIN (V.O.)
We got Ken to give us the tag number of the Saber Vending guys.

PAUL
They're not here. Good. Let's go--

EXT. OASIS HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Paul pries open the door with the crowbar. 7 pale young women stare back in hollow-eyed surprise. Unsure at first, they hastily grab their things in silence and bolt outside.

VIN (V.O.)
Brenda hid them in her office with Rizzo while Steve called some cabs and Ken took down their names.

(MORE)

VIN (CONT'D)

*At the end of the night, those
young women snuck out the back door
and reclaimed their freedom.*

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE OFFICE - EVENING

Cheap Halloween decorations adorn the office's doors and windows. Dressed as a sexy witch, Brenda disco dances with Rizzo in full white polyester glory as zombie John Travolta.

A knock at the door and Snake Plissken enters. Vin lifts his eyepatch and smiles as the couple shake their booties. Their body language affirms that both are still very much in love.

VIN

Am I interrupting something?

BRENDA

At last, the prodigal son returns.

RIZZO

Hey is that the Boss? Bruuuce!

BRENDA

I heard the gig went really well.

VIN

It did. Even Sami showed up.

BRENDA

An that's why ya neva burn bridges.

VIN

Especially if you're a musician.

RIZZO

Mind closing up for us tonight?

VIN

Hope I can remember the alarm code.

BRENDA

What a talent you are. Not only a musician, but a comedian too. Don't break anymore of my sinks, OK?

INT. ADMIRAL BAR AREA - LATER

The bar is quiet. Vin pulls down paper streamers while Kathy takes the register drawers back to the office for counting. Someone outside starts pounding on the door. Vin approaches.

VIN
We're closed.

More banging. Vin grabs the axe handle and unlocks the door.

VIN (CONT'D)
I said we're closed.

Stocky with black hair and a beard, BIG DAVE's flat, even tone suggests a total lack of fear or human emotion.

BIG DAVE
I know.

VIN
Then take a fucking walk.

BIG DAVE
I'm here to pick someone up.

VIN
Everybody's gone. Beat it.

BIG DAVE
I'm here to pick up Kathy.

Vin raises an eyebrow in surprise. He knows who this is.

VIN
Big Dave?

Dave walks in without a word and sits quietly at the bar.

VIN (V.O.)
He looked like a normal guy, but he was feared for good reason and had a ruthless reputation. Big Dave was no fake wannabe gangster. No. This guy was a stone cold killer and a legitimately scary dude in person.

Kathy emerges from the back, kisses Dave and they head out.

KATHY
Have a good night, Vin!

BIG DAVE
See ya round, kid.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE BATHROOM - EVENING

Vin stands at the mirror staring at his defeated reflection.

VIN
I can't believe it. They quit.

PAUL
It was just bad chemistry. Besides,
it's not like you lost Al or Jeff.

Paul does a key bump and offers one to Vin, who declines.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Sorry, forgot.

VIN
How could they do this? We just got
out of the studio. The freakin' CD
covers are already printed.

PAUL
Look, what's the big deal? Now you
can focus on your solo stuff.

VIN
Easy for you to say. We were so
close to getting signed.

PAUL
Listen up motherfucker, cause I'm
only gonna say this once. You're
not Vinny Cole. You're better than
that hair band bullshit. The dude
who recorded those vocals is one of
the meanest singers and songwriters
I've ever heard.

VIN
Thanks man, I--

PAUL
Shut the fuck up.

EXT. LANDFILL - DAY

Seagulls squabble and feast on garbage as a trash truck
crawls across the mountain of waste and backs up to unload
its foul cargo.

It dumps out its payload when a glint in the mirror catches
the driver's eye. Something shiny tumbles out and catches
the sunlight among the sea of plastic bags.

The man walks over and picks up a folded straight razor. He,
opens the blade to find it dirty and smudged with inky soot.

INT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Ken watches Monday Night Football in a vintage Eagles jersey. Vin sits next to him doing bouncer duty.

KEN

They found his car in the Badlands.

VIN

But not him?

KEN

Keys were still in the ignition.
Philly PD thinks he skipped town.

VIN

What do YOU think?

KEN

Well, they have zero witnesses and
no useable prints. What do I think?
(sips beer)
I think someone took out the trash.

EXT. JUNKYARD - NIGHT

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

Backed in to a dead end in a junkyard, Big Dave sips on a coffee cup while reading the Inquirer. Another car soon approaches and flashes its headlights twice.

Cadillac parks and greets Dave warmly with a complex yet familiar handshake. Dave retrieves the gas can as the Caddy's passenger door swings open and Fred steps out gingerly, bandaged and scarred from his healing wounds.

The 3 men enter a remote section of the junkyard and walk over to an old Cadillac DeVille parked in an industrial press, ready to be crushed and sold for scrap.

They walk around to the trunk and pop it open. Gagged and blindfolded, Jumbo lies inside trembling and covered in urine. Cadillac pulls a blunt from his pocket and lights it as Big Dave hands the gas can over to Fred.

VIN (V.O.)

After the cops found Cyndi's body under the bridge, Jumbo became a serious liability. For Big Dave, that kind of heat is bad for business and in his line of work, employees are expendable.

Fred soaks the trunk in gasoline, emptying the entire can on Jumbo, who struggles to free himself.

VIN (V.O.)
He also did Cadillac a solid by helping his Uncle get revenge on Jumbo for setting him on fire, but that was really just a bonus.

Fred removes Jumbo's blindfold and faces him, savoring the shock etched on his face. Using a full pack from The Admiral Lounge, Fred strikes a single match.

FREDDY
 Fuck you lookin at, nigga?

He drops it. Jumbo writhes in agony as he is consumed by the inferno. Fred hits the blunt and watches him burn.

END FLASHBACK

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Vin watches a music video with interest. A new Seattle band has seemingly shaken the foundations of the current rock and roll scene. The phone rings.

VIN
 Hello?

SAMI (O.S.)
 I miss you. Wanna come over?

VIN
 I'll be there in 10.

They hang up. Vin grabs his jacket and keys, but his focus remains on the video. He nods along to the music, listening closely to the lyrics of the band's enigmatic singer.

VIN (CONT'D)
 This guy kind of sounds like Dee Snider. I like it. These guys might be onto something.
 'Here we are now, entertain us!'

Vin hums along as he slams the door behind him.

EXT. SOMERDALE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Steve emerges from the front door in a very bad mood. His bouncers file out a few paces behind like lost sheep.

Chowder has tissue stuffed in his nostrils and a lump on his forehead, Vin dabs a split lip while Paul rubs his wrists and nurses a shiner.

STEVE
(hoarse whisper)
This is it. Last time. I'm done.

PAUL
Hey, they started it--

As they reach his car, Steve turns to angrily confront them.

STEVE
I don't give 2 shits! You dumb fucks have no idea what's going on.

VIN
What do you mean?

STEVE
Brenda, Rizzo.

CHOWDER
What about them?

STEVE
It's bad--

With a sigh, Steve lays out the ugly truth to his troops.

VIN (V.O.)
By that point, the drugs had completely taken over. Brenda and Rizzo barely showed up at all and when they did, they'd just clean out the safe and leave us with barely enough money to operate.

STEVE
Our state taxes haven't been paid in months, and if we don't renew the liquor license soon, they'll shut us down just like that.

VIN (V.O.)
He was right. We all saw it coming, but in the end there was nothing any of us could do to stop it.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Vin shares his latest romantic misadventure with Paul as they cross the empty parking lot to begin another shift.

PAUL
So how'd ya get your car keys back?

VIN
Banged on the door for 10 minutes.

Vin looks to Fred's stoop but he is nowhere to be found.

VIN (CONT'D)
Thank God she let me in before the neighbors called the cops.

PAUL
If ya ask me, it sounds like a great way to spend Thanksgiving.

VIN
Gran scolded me for missing dinner.

PAUL
Could be worse.
Ever had haggis on Thanksgiving?

VIN
Ew. No thank you.

They arrive at the red door and find it chained up tight.

PAUL
What the fuck?

VIN
I have a bad feeling.

PAUL
C'mon, we gotta find a pay phone.

EXT. GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Paul stands in a phonebooth with the receiver to his ear.

VIN (V.O.)
We called Brenda to find out what was going on. She was hysterical.

After some back and forth, Paul hangs up. He looks worried.

VIN
Well?

PAUL
Rizzo's in the hospital.

INT. COOPER HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Paul and Vin navigate the hallways of the busy hospital.

PAUL

No biggie.
He just overdid it again.

VIN (V.O.)

*We were both absolutely certain
that Rizzo was just in a temporary
coma, and by some miracle would
rise like Lazarus from the dead.*

PAUL

Remind me to swing by Miguel's to
get a little blast for the night.

VIN

Why do you continuously do that
garbage, especially when it's
mostly just cut? It gives you the
shits more than it wakes you up.

PAUL

Because it's consistent.

VIN

What the hell does that even mean?

PAUL

It means when I go home, I want to
go to sleep, not be up all night.

VIN

You do get how fucked up and
backwards that is, right?

They reach Rizzo's room, knock twice and enter.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rizzo is in very bad shape. His face and body are so swollen
that his handsome features are now distorted and grotesque.

VIN (V.O.)

*When Paul and I saw Rizzo, his head
was the size of a pumpkin. We tried
to be cheerful and upbeat, but I
knew we were saying goodbye.*

Holding Rizzo's hand, Brenda weeps into Paul's chest.

VIN (V.O.)
*Rizzo never regained consciousness.
 When they pronounced him legally
 brain dead, it really felt like
 Brenda Cordova died, too.*

INT. PAUL'S CAR - LATER

The men sit in grim silence as they wait for a traffic light. A car pulls alongside with Vin's band on the radio and they laugh.

VIN (V.O.)
*We also found out that it was the
 Governor's Office who shut us down.*

PAUL
 Steve tried to fucking warn us.

VIN (V.O.)
*Crime in the area had become
 impossible to ignore, and it was
 national news when Camden was named
 the Most Dangerous City in America.
 We had been competing with Newark
 on and off for a few years and we'd
 mostly won that title. Or lost, to
 put it more appropriately.*

VIN
 Maybe Ken's right.

VIN (V.O.)
*But rather than address the root
 causes, she avoided the issue and
 responded to her critics by
 bulldozing every strip club on
 Admiral Wilson Boulevard in an
 election-year PR media stunt. It
 worked, and she got elected.*

INT. GRANDMOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Grandma is feeding the Sunday masses. Vin enters and greets his extended family with hugs and kisses, discreetly pulling down his shirt sleeves to conceal the scar on his forearm.

AUNT GINNY
 Hey Rockstar, jeet?

VIN
 Not yet, Aunt Gin.

GRANDMA

Come and sit down. I made chicken cutlets and that string bean salad your Grandfather likes. So, how's the music going?

VIN

Well, the band broke up. But one of the guys who created Woodstock heard me and wants to produce an album or 2 with me, so I'm working on new material and putting together a new band.

GRANDMA

That's nice, you know we're always pulling for you. Maybe it'll make you some money. That'd be nice.

VIN

Maybe, Grandmom. Maybe.

From across the table, Aunt Ginny emphatically chimes in:

AUNT GINNY

Did you say Woodstock? I heard youse on the radio, by the way.

VIN

That guy has a ton of hit songs. You remember 'Dead Man's Curve'?

AUNT GINNY

Sure! Jan and Dean. Love that song.

VIN

He said he liked my music, so he's flying up from Florida to meet me.

AUNT GINNY

Will you keep on paving streets?

GRANDMA

(concerned)

Still don't like you doing that road construction business.

VIN

Pay is good and I need the money.

GRANDMA

You don't work at the club anymore?

VIN
 (cheerful)
 I work at a new place now, playing records up in the DJ booth. It's a little more in line with what I love to do.

GRANDMA
 Vinny, when are you going to find a nice girl and settle down?

VIN (V.O.)
Here we go again.

VIN
 Sami and I got back together.

Pleased with the news, Grandma can't hide her amusement.

GRANDMA
 Again? What is it with you two? One week your together, the next you're broken up. I can't keep track.

INT. MALL RECORD STORE - AFTERNOON

Vin and Sami hold hands and browse the racks of CDs. Grunge and hip hop dominate the new releases. Something unexpected stops Vin in his tracks between Green Day and Guns n Roses.

VIN
 You gotta be fucking kidding.

SAMI
 What'd you find?

Vin raises a copy of GUN SHY's debut CD 'After Dark'.

SAMI (CONT'D)
 Shut up!

VIN
 Jeff got us a record deal after all. How about that?

VIN (V.O.)
Jeff had gone on to replace our Producer in his band and before you know it, he found a label to promote our CD, too.

(MORE)

VIN (CONT'D)

We all had moved on to other major projects, but we never forgot where we started, and those first songs that launched our careers. They were like our children.

SUPER: YEARS LATER

INT. TROCADERO NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Vin performs onstage at the packed venue with a new solo band including Al and Dan. The crowd can't get enough.

SUPER: Vin did eventually go on to sign a deal with the creators of Woodstock and fronted a band bearing his name. He released multiple albums as a successful solo artist but never forgot those Gun Shy days that started it all.

EXT. ADMIRAL WILSON BOULEVARD - NIGHT

Haggard and strung out, Brenda propositions johns on the Boulevard as they honk and speed past in their cars.

SUPER: Brenda was struck and killed by an 18 wheeler. A homeless man who witnessed the incident hinted at suicide.

INT. SMALL APARTMENT - DAY

A furious woman snatches a child away from Ken and storms out. With an anguished sob, he tearfully raises a handgun.

SUPER: Officer Ken Rivolli's death was ruled accidental so that his children could receive his pension and benefits.

EXT. ADMIRAL LOUNGE PARKING LOT - DAY

Fred watches as heavy equipment demolishes the Admiral. The red door falls with a thud, sending a 5 dollar bill aloft on a cloud of debris. He snags it in midair and shuffles off triumphantly down the street with the stray cat by his side.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

With 2 quarts of beer in hand, Fred uses the remaining change to buy a single scratch-off lottery ticket. He scrapes at it with a coin and gasps in mute astonishment.

SUPER: Fred's whereabouts are unknown.

CUT TO BLACK - ROLL CREDITS